

# IMPACT REPORT

2025



[darboninstitute.org](https://darboninstitute.org)

 DARBON  
INSTITUTE

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# Letter from the Chair

It has been a breakthrough year for The Darbon Institute.

In January the board held a strategic planning session that resulted in our new Theory of Change, which sets our future focus and direction across three key program areas:

- Public and professional education
- Trauma-informed support services
- Lived experience leadership

In June we launched our lived experience program with the appointment of Jace Simmons as our first Ambassador, and education program with new resources on the website and a hugely successful symposium at the World Association for Sexual Health Congress in Brisbane ([read my reflections on the congress here](#)).

On 19 September we held a Special General Meeting and adopted a new Constitution to support our new focus.

And this month we launched the first of what will be a suite of online courses to up-skill and build the competence of professionals to respond to circumcision harms. Our online education offering will also be a key source of revenue for the organisation going forward.

As we look to the new year, I am encouraged to be welcoming new directors to the board. I would also like to thank outgoing Director Hugh Young for his many years of dedicated service to our organisation. It is my pleasure to announce Hugh as our first Honorary Life Member.

Paid Life Memberships are also now available to members. In addition to avoiding the hassle of having to update your card details, you can feel good knowing that by front-loading your membership you allow us to get more done sooner.

On behalf of the board, I thank you for your ongoing support. Nothing we do would be possible without it.



**Chairperson, Jonathan Meddings**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Meddings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Letter from the EO

As I round out my first year as inaugural Executive Officer, I am thrilled with the progress the organisation is making as we work toward our vision.

In April I travelled to the UK, spending time with David Smith and Jason Metters from 15 Square before travelling with them, as well as Leanne and Paul Morris, to Cologne, Germany to represent Darbon at the Worldwide Day of Genital Autonomy.

In June I formed part of the delegation attending 27th World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) Congress in Brisbane. Following our panel discussion (a collaboration between Darbon, 15 Square from the UK and GALDEF from the USA), the overwhelming response of attendees was “we had no idea of the enormity of the issue but now it is obvious.”

We’ve since been contacted by psychologists, psychotherapists and sexologists who are keen to work with us in accepting referrals for men affected by circumcision harms.

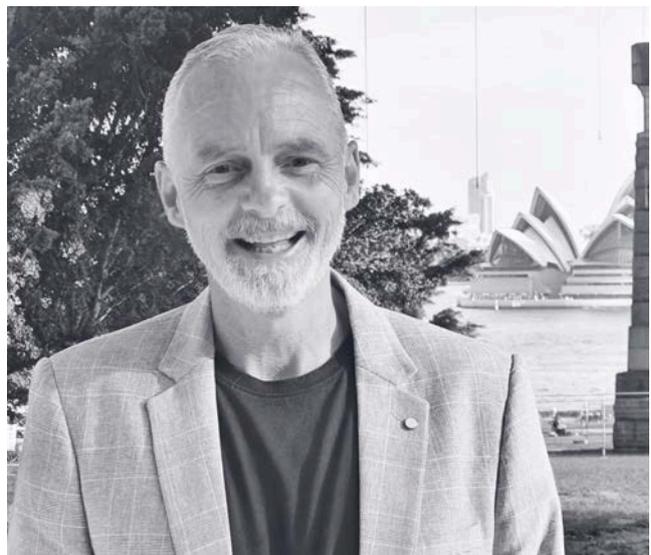
We’ve also since applied to be an organisational member of WAS, and joined as an organisational member of its Asia-Oceania federation of Sexology regional body.

We have made two key appointments this year:

- Jace Simmons as our first ever Ambassador.
- Lachlan Sutherland as our Archive Curator will ensure that Robert Darby’s legacy and enormous contribution to the historical record of our movement is in good hands.

We also launched our new online training, which is a world-first, and lays the foundation for us making referrals to trauma-informed professionals.

Finally, I’d like to personally thank outgoing director Hugh Young for his valued input, direction and commitment to our predecessor organisation AIGA as well as the Darbon Institute. You will be missed Hugh.



**Executive Officer, Tim Arkell**

# About Darbon



## Our vision

A healthier Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand where the harms of genital cutting are prevented and people with lived and living experience of those harms are supported.

## We believe

- parents and health professionals want the best for children, and given the right information most will respect the child's right to bodily integrity and autonomy;
- people with lived and living experience of the harms of genital cutting should have access to the trauma-informed treatment, care and support they need and deserve; and
- people with lived and living experience should be meaningfully engaged in the programs and services we provide.

# Professional education



## 27th World Association for Sexual Health Congress

The Darbon Institute organised and chaired a symposium titled *Uncut voices: Exploring the sexual, psychological and lived experiences of circumcision harms* at the 27<sup>th</sup> World Association for Sexual Health Congress in Brisbane. Held on 19 June 2025, the symposium was one of the best attended at the congress with more than 100 people in the audience.



[Watch now](#)

The symposium featured presentations by Darbon Chair Jonathan Meddings, UK psychotherapist Leanne Morris, and Alaskan physician Dr Leif Thompson, followed by a panel discussion including Leif who shared his Jewish perspective, Darbon Ambassador Jace Simmons who shared his lived experience, and Darbon Executive Officer Tim Arkell, who spoke about legal issues and the organisation's history and future focus.

The Congress also featured excellent presentations from Dr Alfonso Cepeda-Emiliani on penile neurotomy and Prof Yuko Higashi on sexual justice and genital modifications.



## **World-first online course on male genital cutting**

In November we launched Male Genital Cutting 101, a world-first online course created specifically for health, mental health, and sexology professionals who want to better understand and support clients affected by male genital cutting.

Developed by leading expert and author Jonathan Meddings, and reviewed by lived experience, mental health, and medical professionals, this concise, evidence-based course equips students with the foundational knowledge to navigate the complex physical, psychological, cultural and ethical dimensions of male genital cutting.

Students will gain the insight and confidence needed to engage sensitively and knowledgeably with clients, enhance their clinical competence, and join a growing network of practitioners committed to trauma-informed, person-centred care for people with lived and living experience of male genital cutting.

This fully self-paced online course takes roughly 8 hours and must be completed for practitioners to be eligible to receive client referrals from The Darbon Institute.

The course can be accessed on Moodle ([Create your student account here](#)).

# Lived experience



## Our first Ambassador

This year we launched our lived experience leadership program and announced Jason (Jace) Simmons (pictured above) as our first Ambassador in June, when he spoke with incredible courage and conviction during our panel discussion at the WAS Congress ([Watch now](#)).

*“Sharing how I was harmed and my healing journey is a chance to offer hope and a voice that empowers others.”*

*- Jace Simmons*

Our public education and lived experience programs work hand-in-hand, as we train and support people with lived and living experience of the harms of genital cutting to safely and effectively share their stories in ways that educate and persuade others to stop performing these harmful practices.

# Public education



Max Roberts on SBS Insight

## Community and media engagement

On 4 March, Darbon Institute Director Max Roberts (pictured above, front row) appeared on SBS Insight. The episode *Your Body, Your Choice?* focussed on bodily autonomy in several contexts, with Max adding his voice and personal experience of circumcision harms to the discussion ([Watch now](#)). A clip of Max's contribution on the program's Facebook and Instagram pages garnered 2.8 million views only a day after being posted. Max is no stranger to SBS, having also appeared on *The Feed* in 2019 to discuss foreskin restoration.

On 3 May, our Executive Officer Tim Arkell spoke at WWDOGA in Cologne, showcasing our work on the international stage ([Watch now](#)).

On 27 August our Ambassador Jace shared his story during an in-depth interview on *A Seed of Wisdom* podcast ([Watch now](#)).

On 27 September, our Chair Jonathan Meddings presented to 40 members of the SOFIA inter-faith community group on the work of The Darbon Institute and his book, *The Final Cut: The truth about circumcision*.



*Tim Arkell addresses the crowd at WWDOGA 2025*

## Online archive

Upon his passing, in addition to his generous bequest the medical historian Robert Darby provided The Darbon Institute with his large collection of valuable circumcision resources. This year we completed the transfer of this content from Darby's personal websites to the Darbon Institute's online archive ([View here](#)).

We also appointed Lachlan Sutherland as our Archive Curator, a role which will involve Lachlan formatting hundreds of pages of content and fixing thousands of hyperlinks that were broken during the transfer process. Beyond that, Lachlan is the perfect person to continue building out the archive to ensure it captures key resources and moments in our movement going forward.



Archive Curator, Lachlan Sutherland

## Social media snapshot

We continue to grow our online presence. TikTok remains the platform with our largest following and engagement.

This year we also added YouTube to our online channels to house recordings of our symposium at the World Association for Sexual Health Congress. We're told the recordings have already been used to educate students as part of a Curtin University's Diploma of Sexology.

**> 24.6 k followers**

**> 14.7 million views**

**> 868 k likes**

Click the icons to follow us



# Honouring Hugh Young

Outgoing Aotearoa New Zealand director, Hugh Young, was a founding member and director of the Darbon Institute, as well as its predecessor, the Australian Institute for Genital Autonomy (AIGA), the latter of which he joined in 2013 on the invitation of Paul Mason.

Hugh first met Paul at one of several international symposia on genital autonomy he attended that were organised by the American genital autonomy pioneer, Marilyn Milos (who lost her job as a nurse in 1985 for advising mothers not to circumcise their sons, then founded the National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers, NOCIRC).

There he also met many others including Van Lewis (arrested for demonstrating against circumcision in 1970), Ken McGrath (international expert on the anatomy and physiology of the intact penis), David Smith and Dr John Warren (founders of 15 Square in the UK), Georganne Chapin (founder of Intact America), and Mark Reiss (who began an online list of rabbis and others willing to celebrate non-cutting naming ceremonies for Jewish boys). Hugh maintained that website for Mark for nearly 20 years.



**[Hugh Young at the Genital Autonomy Symposium in Padua, Italy, circa 2004](#)**

Since 1998 he has maintained the Intactivism Pages, an online repository about all aspects of genital cutting—cultural, legal, ethical, medical, and historical—at [circumstitions.com](http://circumstitions.com). He also presented four papers at Genital Autonomy symposia:

- on the remarkable rise and fall of cutting in Aotearoa New Zealand, with Ken McGrath;
- on circumcision as a memplex, an interlocking cluster of units of culture, transmitted by imitation;
- on methods of cutting, none of them well-adapted to the complex anatomy;
- and on the mass media denigration of the foreskin and contradictory treatment of cutting as being trivial and yet important, painful for men to endure yet not for babies.



*Hugh Young and Marilyn Milos*

Hugh also knew our great benefactor, Robert Darby, who wrote *A Surgical Temptation: The Demonization of the Foreskin and the Rise of Circumcision in Britain*. With Robert he worked on debunking the ‘sand myth’ that many men in the African campaign of World War II had needed their foreskins cut off because of infection caused by desert sand.

The American Academy of Pediatrics released an updated policy on female genital cutting in 2010 that deleted a recommendation doctors refuse to perform the operation, and instead suggested doctors could perform a ‘ritual nick’ on girls’ genitals.

Hugh first drew attention to this backward step in a letter to the AAP’s journal, *Pediatrics*. A chorus of condemnation followed and within a month the policy was abandoned.

Hugh has made a point of bringing an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective to board meetings. The issues there are somewhat different from Australia—infant circumcision is now quite rare among non-Polynesians and Māori—but they are nonetheless important.

From all of us at The Darbon Institute, thank you for your service Hugh.

***“I hope that in 100 years or so, the world can look back on infant male genital cutting and ask – What were they thinking?”***

***- Hugh Young***

# Expert advisory board



**Dr Olayide Ogunsiji** is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University. Originally from Nigeria, she moved to Australia in 1999 and joined Western Sydney University in 2008. Her research focuses on women's and family health, particularly eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting.



**Dr Olivia Lesslar** is a medical doctor with a background in International Relations. Noted for her 2009 Festival of Dangerous Ideas speech on male infant circumcision, she advocates for bodily integrity and patient autonomy. Dr Lesslar serves as Medical Consultant for Lifespan Medicine, CFS Health, and Scott Laidler Fitness, and is a board member of Doctors for Refugees.



**Professor Pete Smith** is an allergist immunologist on the Gold Coast. He is Professor of Clinical Medicine at Griffith University, and Neuroimmunology at The Menzies National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Disease. He has published 161 papers and sits on global advisory boards for rhinitis, anaphylaxis and food allergy.



**Travis Wisdom** holds a BA (women's studies), MA (human rights), LLM (international law) and is a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. His research focuses on human rights and the socio-legal regulation of bodies, including genital cutting, intersex interventions, and gender affirmation procedures for children.

# Board of directors



**Jonathan Meddings (Chair)** is the author of *The Final Cut: The truth about circumcision* ([Get your copy: Affiliate link](#)). He has worked as a medical and science writer, authoring over a hundred medical fact sheets and co-authoring market-leading biology textbooks. Jonathan holds degrees in medical science with honours and arts with majors in philosophy and politics, and his career as a public policy professional in the community health sector has spanned addiction, mental health, HIV and LGBTIQ+ policy.



**Caroline Bayer (Secretary)** is a Melbourne-based business development specialist. She has held senior roles across the environmental, community health (specifically LGBTIQ+), Indigenous community development sectors, and local and Commonwealth government departments. She is now Partner and Director, Business Development of a social purpose business consultancy. Caroline is passionate about social and environmental justice, women's rights and equality. She has a Diploma of Business, Diploma of Governance and is a member of the Fundraising Institute of Australia.



**Maxwell Roberts (Treasurer)** lives in Melbourne and has a background in accounting. He is the Director of Intact Australia, a grassroots genital autonomy organisation working to end unnecessary genital cutting of minors. He is a passionate advocate for human rights, children's rights, animal welfare and welfare of the under-privileged.



**Dr Pamela J. Ferrada** (BBiochem, MTeach, PhD) is a biomedical scientist with a background in HIV-1 and human stem cell research. Originally from Chile, Pamela migrated to Australia in 2008 to pursue a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN) at the University of Queensland. Pamela worked for over ten years in fetal stem cell research and clinical laboratories in Australia and overseas before becoming an educator. She has also completed a Medical Law course with Barry Nilsson Lawyers in Queensland and is currently completing a postgraduate certificate Training to Teach in Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Pamela works in clinico-legal education and is an Educational Activity Representative (EAR) for the Royal Australian College of General practitioners (RACGP).



**Hugh Young** is a retired broadcaster/editor who has been active in Intactivism since the 1990s. He maintains The Intactivism Pages, [circumstitions.com](http://circumstitions.com). He has presented four papers at International Symposia on genital autonomy. Hugh lives in Porirua, New Zealand.

# Looking forward



In 2026 we will:

- send a delegation to the European Federation of Sexology Congress in Lisbon and WWDOGA in Cologne to promote our work on the international stage;
- recruit a Peer Support Practitioner and establish an online peer support service;
- add additional resources to our website for parents and the broader public;
- launch an online course as part of our lived experience leadership program to support people to safely and effectively share their lived and living experience; and
- continue to progress our online public education campaign in partnership with 15 Square. A wealth of content is currently being reviewed against content guidelines to ensure it is strengths-based and culturally sensitive. Funds permitting, we hope to conduct a discourse analysis and rigorous message testing to ensure we are not only generating awareness but building our supporter base in the process.

If you'd like to discuss supporting us or working with us on any of these initiatives, contact [chair@darboninstitute.org](mailto:chair@darboninstitute.org) or [eo@darboninstitute.org](mailto:eo@darboninstitute.org) for a confidential discussion.

# Contact information



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