



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

31 January 2023

NEW RACP CIRCUMCISION POSITION WILL LEAD TO MORE DEATHS, WARNS LEADING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATION

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has released a [new position statement](#) on male circumcision. It comes one year after [a young Perth boy tragically died](#) from complications resulting from a medically unnecessary circumcision. His younger brother, who was circumcised at the same time and left in a critical condition, thankfully survived.

The updated position statement emphasises respect for parental choice but fails to explain why parents should be allowed to consent to unnecessary cosmetic procedures that permanently remove a part of their child's body.

The RACP's [previous position statement](#) released in 2010 detailed the functions of the foreskin, emphasised the ethical risk in performing unnecessary surgery on a person who cannot object or resist, and considered the lifetime effect on men – many of whom bitterly resent that they were circumcised. All these important considerations have been removed in the updated statement.

Another striking feature of the updated policy is that it gets basic anatomy wrong, describing the foreskin as merely skin when it is a complex structure that contains not just skin but also a mucous membrane, muscle, connective tissue, and blood vessels. It also describes the head of the penis as the most sensitive part when it is the least sensitive.

In fact, the foreskin is the most sensitive part of the penis. That's why the routine circumcision of young boys began in the late 19th century in a failed effort to prevent masturbation, which was wrongly believed to cause not only moral but also physical harm. Circumcision then spread throughout the English-speaking world in the first half of the 20th century for medical reasons that are no longer considered valid, before fading away in the second half – almost completely in Aotearoa New Zealand, but it continues in Australia at a rate of up to 20 per cent in some states.

Quotes attributable to Jonathan Meddings, Chair of The Darbon Institute and author of *The Final Cut: The truth about circumcision*

“Young boys are being harmed every day and it is only a matter of time before more die from unnecessary cosmetic circumcisions. It’s simply not good enough for the RACP to turn a blind eye to this. It erodes trust in the medical profession.”

“The RACP states that parental choice to circumcise should be respected. But why? There are many decisions parents rightly get to make for their children. Deciding how much of their bodies they get to keep should not be one of them.”



"The new RACP position on male circumcision downplays the complications, fails to understand basic anatomy, neglects to mention the functions of the foreskin, and displays a concerning lack of understanding about medical ethics and consent for medically unnecessary cosmetic procedures. It is also clear that no survivors of male genital cutting were consulted in its development, which is totally unacceptable."

Quotes attributable to Dr Olivia Lesslar, MBBS, BIR

"The RACP position is about circumcision of *infant* males, yet it talks about HIV and other STIs that aren't relevant until someone reaches the age of sexual maturity and can make the circumcision decision for themselves."

"Even if there are benefits to circumcision that doesn't justify it being done to children who can't consent. As a medical practitioner I'm concerned that some doctors are pushing medically unnecessary circumcisions."

Quotes attributable to Tim Arkell, survivor of male genital cutting

"When I asked my parents why they had me circumcised all I got was 'to look like your father'. That still hurts. It's my body, it should have been my choice."

"Many men resent being circumcised when they were too young to consent to it. That's why hundreds of thousands of men are restoring their foreskins. I'm one of them."

For more information

Jonathan Meddings | Chair | Darbon Institute

chair@darboninstitute.org | +61 437 435 091 | www.darboninstitute.org