

Strategic Plan 2020-2025

OUR HISTORY



PAUL MASON

On 7 May 2012, a court in Cologne, Germany, ruled that the non-therapeutic circumcision of a young boy represented grievous bodily harm and was not in the child's best interests.¹

On 7 May 2013, the anniversary of this landmark court decision, a group led by barrister and family lawyer Paul Mason founded AIGA to protect and promote everyone's right to bodily integrity and genital autonomy in our region.



ROBERT DARBY

In 2020, AIGA rebranded as The Darbon Institute, a blend of the surnames of our founder the late Paul Mason, and main benefactor the late Robert Darby, who was a medical historian and respected scholar on the subject of circumcision.

We acknowledge and thank Paul, whose energy brought us together and gave us a strong foundation, and Robert, whose generous bequest has ensured our work will continue into the future.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



JONATHAN MEDDINGS

In this plan, we outline the strategic direction of The Darbon Institute as it works toward a future in which everyone's right to bodily integrity and genital autonomy is protected and promoted.

We stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us, trailblazers like Paul Mason and Robert Darby. We continue their work with a renewed sense of purpose, a clear and collective direction, and unwavering resolve.

In the absence of medical necessity or an individual's own informed consent, no one should be subjected to invasive, permanent bodily alterations such as genital cutting. Non-consensual, medically unnecessary genital cutting is harmful, unethical and a human rights violation. These practices have no place in civilised society.

We will continue to work constructively with community and government at all levels to ensure human rights obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant ratified conventions and covenants, are met. We will also continue to advocate for the right to genital autonomy espoused by the Helsinki Declaration.

This strategic plan sets out our strategic goals and priorities for the next five years as we continue to organise, grow, and advocate for a world where no child is subjected genital mutilation, and every baby is brought home whole. This future will not arrive tomorrow, but if you join us today, you will help to make it a reality sooner.

In solidarity,



Jonathan Meddings

16,000 to 32,000

the number of newborn Australian boys that have their foreskins surgically removed each year

OUR VISION

We envision a world where the right to bodily integrity and autonomy is respected, protected and promoted for everyone.

OUR MISSION

We advocate for everyone's right to bodily integrity and genital autonomy, and educate the public, medical profession and government about the harms of non-consensual, medically unnecessary genital cutting and other body alterations so that these practices come to an end.

OUR RIGHTS

We affirm the following inalienable rights:

- the right to genital autonomy;²
- the right to security of person³ which safeguards against bodily or mental injury;⁴
- the right to the highest attainable standard of health,⁵ which includes sexual and reproductive health as well as the right to control one's body;⁶
- the right of children to be free from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse,⁷ which safeguards children's right to bodily autonomy and physical and psychological integrity, and to equal protection under the law;⁸
- the right of children, as individual bearers of rights, to have their best interests given primary consideration,⁹ and to have their best interests assessed even if they cannot express their views in the same way as older children;¹⁰
- the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;¹¹ a right that is protected and promoted with respect to non-consensual, medically unnecessary female genital cutting;¹² a right that is increasingly recognised with respect to non-consensual, medically unnecessary intersex genital modifications;¹³ and a right that also needs to be protected and promoted with respect to non-consensual, medically unnecessary male genital cutting; and
- the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,¹⁴ which includes ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief,¹⁵ and which "can never be legitimately invoked [including inter alia, by third parties] to justify the infliction of grave and often traumatic violations of a person's physical and psychological integrity."¹⁶

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the number of successful
criminal prosecutions for female
genital mutilation in Australia

OUR VALUES

- **Justice**

We are committed to achieving justice for survivors of non-consensual, medically unnecessary genital cutting and other non-consensual body modifications.

- **Inclusion**

We believe everyone has a right to bodily integrity and autonomy, regardless of their sex or gender.

- **Equality**

We believe the human rights of all people should be respected, protected and promoted, and that children are individual bearers of rights, not the property of their parents.

- **Courage**

We will stand up for what is right, advocate for the voiceless, and provide a safe platform for survivors of genital cutting and mutilation to speak truth to power.

- **Collaboration**

We recognise that our mission can only be achieved by working collaboratively through strong, respectful partnerships.

- **Integrity**

We recognise that integrity is essential and as such our values guide every aspect of our work.

Up to 1.7%

the proportion of people born with variations
in sex characteristics (intersex variations)

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1 Expand the reach and impact of our work

- Redevelop the organisation's website.
- Develop educational materials for the public and parents.
- Engage in and support community outreach activities.
- Develop communication and stakeholder engagement strategies.
- Develop a media guide.

2 Engage in effective policy and advocacy

- Establish an expert advisory board.
- Establish a policy subcommittee.
- Form strategic partnerships.
- Influence public policy and law reform through the development of evidence-based policy and advocacy.

3 Exercise trusted leadership

- Work in close partnership with people with lived experience of non-consensual, medically unnecessary genital cutting and other non-consensual body alterations.
- Advance our priorities through policy advice with government and other key stakeholders.
- Build the organisation's mainstream media presence.
- Form strategic partnerships and identify opportunities for collaboration.

4 Build a financially sustainable organisation

- Obtain charitable status.
- Increase donations and bequests.
- Grow the organisation's member base.
- Apply for relevant grant opportunities.

Endnotes

- 1 Swatek-Evenstein, M. (2013) Limits of Enlightenment and the Law - On the Legality of Ritual Male Circumcision in Europe today, *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law*, 29(77).
- 2 Helsinki Declaration, 12th International Symposium on Law, Genital Autonomy & Children's Rights Helsinki, Finland, 29 September to 3 October 2012
- 3 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, opened for signature 16 December 1966, 999 UNTS 171 (entered into force 23 March 1976) art 9.
- 4 Human Rights Committee. (2014). General Comment No. 35 – Article 9 (Liberty and security of person), UN Doc CCPR/C/GC/35, para 9.
- 5 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, opened for signature 16 December 1966, 993 UNTS 3 (entered into force 3 January 1976) art 12; Convention on the Rights of the Child, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990) art 24.
- 6 Convention on the Rights of the Child, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990) art 24(1-3).
- 7 Convention on the Rights of the Child, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990) art 19(1).
- 8 Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2007). General Comment No. 8 (2006) – The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment (Arts. 19; 28, para. 2; and 37, inter alia), 42nd sess, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/8, para 2; Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2011). General Comment No. 13 (2011) – The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/13, para 7(c).
- 9 Convention on the Rights of the Child, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990) art 3(1).
- 10 Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2013). General Comment No 14 – The right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1), UN Doc CRC/C/GC/14, para 44.
- 11 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, opened for signature 16 December 1966, 999 UNTS 171 (entered into force 23 March 1976) art 7.
- 12 Nowak, M. (2010). Report of the special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. 13th sess, Agenda Item 3, UN Doc A/HRC/13/39/Add.5, addendum ('Study on the phenomena of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the world, including an assessment of conditions of detention') para 201; Human Rights Committee. (2000). General Comment No. 28: Article 3 ('The equality of rights between men and women'), UN Doc CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.10, para 11.
- 13 Méndez, J.E. (2016) Report of the special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 31st sess, Agenda Item 3, UN Doc A/HRC/31/57, para 48.
- 14 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, opened for signature 16 December 1966, 999 UNTS 171 (entered into force 23 March 1976) art 18.
- 15 Human Rights Committee. (1993). General Comment No. 22: Article 18 (Freedom of thought, conscience or religion), UN Doc CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, para 4.
- 16 Bielefeldt, H. (2013). Report of the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, (Addendum, mission to the Republic of Sierra Leone), UN Doc A/HRC/25/58/Add.1 para 43.