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Sunday Times Magazine - Into the Light

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### **Into The Light**

IPL is the latest buzzword in the beauty world, being used more and more to reduce the appearance of sunspots, hormonal pigmentation and scarring.

A huge portion of my childhood was spent on the pristine beaches of Queensland's Gold Coast.

Days were spent basking in the sun and a great tan was considered a sign of good health. Of course, this was before melanoma became a national crisis, before the "Slip, slop, slap." campaign, and when the highest SPF was 15.

These were the days when the holiday skincare regime included plenty of coconut oil and perhaps some zinc for the tip of the nose. The local radio station blasted across Main Beach and reminded us every 20 minutes to turn over, just like big rotisserie chickens.

I cringe at the thought now.

Unfortunately, these years of sun worship have done their damage, and I now sport a smattering of pretty freckles and a couple of not-so-pretty sunspots. The real and not-yet-visible damage can be seen beneath the ultraviolet light of a skin scanner.

I am in Karen Bowen's Applecross clinic, and a little concerned about what I am seeing. The lamp has revealed hundreds of freckles and pigmentation mainly caused by the sun.

Karen, a paramedical skin technician with more than 24 years experience, has an excellent reputation for getting results where others have failed. She and her sister Monica, a nurse, make a well-trained team.

Karen works in conjunction with cosmetic surgeons, plastic surgeons and dermatologists to provide treatment to clients both before and after cosmetic surgery, as well as treating those looking for non-surgical solutions.

I fall into the latter category. At 33, I'm not interested in invasive procedures, but I'm definitely hoping to improve the appearance and condition of my skin.

Karen delivers good news – a lot of this damage can be removed using IPL, or Intense Pulsed Light. It's not a laser light, but a more advanced technology using broad spectrum light. Using selected filters the light is absorbed by pigment, vascular lesions and red spider veins. The body recognises this as waste, and migrates them out of the body through the lymph system and skin.

Sounds fascinating? It is. IPL can remove or reduce pigmentation such as freckles and sunspots,

red blemishes, Rosacea, broken blood vessels, and can also improve acne and subsequent scarring. It also has great results on permanent hair reduction.

And there's a bonus. While the light is quickly zapping your freckles and spots, it's also stimulating collagen regrowth. In three months' time my fine lines will be visibly reduced. No complaints here.

The treatment Karen recommends IPL to my face and hands, which involves approximately 100 pulses of light to each. And it does hurt – each pulse feels like a rubber band being flicked against the skin, and afterwards stings a bit like sunburn. My skin is red and a little puffy, but there's no real downtime. It is vital to stay out of the sun three weeks prior and up to four weeks after treatment, so the treatment may not suit everyone. Karen applies some mineral make-up (anti-bacterial), and I head back to work.

Throughout the day the redness dissipates, but the pigmentation and freckles begin to darken. Karen calls it Milo-ing – basically because you look a bit like you've been splashed with Milo.

One week later there is a definite improvement in the texture of my skin. Despite the Milo-ing (which is nearly all gone), my skin is feeling smooth and firm. It's a really strange thing to watch the freckles fall off your face. My hands are still splotchy, but apparently they'll take a little longer. The capillary network in the hands is not as complex as the face, which is why the face heals so quickly.

I book in for a potent Danne enzyme treatment that's designed to stimulate blood flow, activate lymphatic drainage and remove toxins, gases and debris from the skin – dramatically increasing the healing process.

This is no facial. This is intense. My skin takes on a life of its own as the enzymes dry on my face. The mask pulsates and throbs for 40 minutes before it's removed.

***"You don't come to me for a fluffy facial, you come for results," says Karen. "It may not be a pleasant experience, but your skin will benefit tremendously."***

Karen is right. While I walk away with a red face, I wake the next morning with results.

Two weeks after treatment all the Milo-ing is gone. My face looks noticeably lighter and brighter, and people are commenting on it. My sunspots have completely gone, and I can't believe how great my hands look. I can hardly recognise them. I book in for a final Danne enzyme treatment that will encourage new collagen growth and release potent anti-oxidants into the skin.

### **The verdict**

I am thrilled. My face is firmer, plumper, smoother, lighter and brighter. People have commented that I am glowing, and my skin looks noticeably younger.

The pigmentation and sunspots have gone after just one treatment. Fine lines around my eyes and mouth are noticeably reduced and Karen tells me it will only get better once the new collagen production kicks in.

The most dramatic improvement has been my hands. I had no idea they could ever look this good again.

A note on hair loss – a close friend bravely had her bikini-line IPL-ed. Brazilian – ouch. She'd had IPL three years before, with random results.

"After four sessions, I had about a third less hair, but it was a general thinning, not removal," she says. After one treatment with Karen, the hair is nearly all gone. "I am amazed at the results," my friend says. "I've lost 85 per cent of the remaining hair – permanently. There is an unbelievably difference in the two treatments. If I had known it was going to be this good I would have left some hair there!"

The cost:

Face, \$450. Face, neck and décolletage, \$800. Hands, \$250. Permanent hair reduction – underarms, \$220; bikini-line, \$250; extended bikini-line, \$350. All prices are approximate.

Allow some extra dollars for product. The clinic stocks a huge range of Danne products that are personally prescribed. Karen also suggests one or two enzyme treatments in the weeks after IPL treatment, increasing the blood flow to the skin, and dramatically lessening recovery time. Danne enzyme treatments range from \$168-\$200.

About Danne

Danne products use all-natural botanical-based ingredients formulated to imitate the chemistry of the skin. Dr Danne Montague-King is a botanical scientist and cosmetic chemist.

Dr King has treated A-list stars with everything from pigmentation problems to adult acne, developing procedures based on the use of properly balanced organic ingredients and the demands of the body's cell structures.

Where to go

Karen Bowen, Paramedical Skin Therapist, Shop 4, 4 Sleaford Rd, Applecross. Phone 9316 3836, or go to [www.karenbowen.com](http://www.karenbowen.com) for more information.

There are plenty of other salons offering IPL, and if you're looking for an alternative therapist, be sure to check their credentials, and the standard of the machine they are using.

Karen uses the latest medically approved Quantum Lumenis IPL machine. It's been clinically proven in more than 10 years of use and is one of just a few IPL machines that are medically approved.