

Forget the fantasy, feeling like a natural woman is unreal

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The final frontier of womanhood is under siege from the “beauty” police.

EXPERTS estimate that if deforestation continues to increase at current rates, by the year 2037 there will be no female pubic hair left in Australia.

Every day, in salons across the country, an area of pubic hair the size of Richmond is covered in hot wax and ripped out from the roots. Some of it may be old growth that has been flourishing undisturbed for years, perhaps even decades. But in literally minutes it is gone.

Although the statistics are made up, the phenomenon is real. Ten years ago, Germaine

Greer remarked in *The Whole Woman* that “[a] woman who disported herself in a bikini out of which a bush of pubic hair sprouted would be regarded as a walking obscenity”. Today, it seems that pubic hair is not even to be tolerated in the privacy of one’s own knickers. The growing popularity of the “Brazilian”, an import from the porn industry in which all (or, in artistic fashion, most) genital hair is removed, is creating a new “norm of hairlessness”.

According to University of Florida academic Magdala Peixoto Labre, while *Playboy* centrefolds of the 1980s “displayed an abundance of pubic hair”, since 2001 the style has been “a Barbie doll-like, hairless crotch, that would only occur naturally among pre-adolescent girls”. With *Playboy* now so mainstream that their branded stationery is marketed to pre-teen girls, it should

hardly be surprising that the Bunny-brand crotch has also caught on and is setting new standards. A Melbourne-based beauty therapist, writing in *The Age*, suggested that “girls in their 20s have Brazilians because that’s what expected of them in their generation . . . My younger clients say that men of their age just expect it, and they think it’s not right if the girl does have pubic hair”.

Unfortunately for women, upholding these high genital standards is neither cheap nor painless. Clearing the pubic forest costs about \$60 and must be repeated every month to keep nether regions as smooth and hairless as the day you were born. That’s \$720 a year (not forgetting the time involved), that arguably could be spent on experiences more rewarding than taking off your underwear in front of a stranger who lifts your legs over your shoulders,

pours hot wax over intimate and sensitive regions of your anatomy, and then yanks out from the roots the hairs that grow there.

Yet many women are embracing this new trend. They say that they feel sexier with one of their secondary sexual characteristics removed. No doubt. But how sad that in the 21st century the habitat for that

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most rare and endangered entity — acceptance of the natural adult female state — should still be shrinking fast. It used to live under the arms and on the legs, but these territories were razed a long time ago. It tried living in the eyebrows, but the constant peril of approach-

ing tweezers drove it out. The forest on the head is bountiful, but too often polluted by the chemicals in hair dyes. And so, it lives down below — and its last remaining hirsute home is under threat.

Meanwhile, the younger generation watches and learns. In *Getting Real*, a new book about the sexualisation of girls, editor Melinda Tankard Reist shows how the relentless pressure on women to be better-than-real is touching the lives of girls at an increasingly young age — including the inculcation of a desire for hair-free genitals. She describes a Melbourne-based website for girls that, until complaints were made, promoted Brazilian waxing alongside ads for *Playschool* and Barbie Princess dolls.

“Nobody really likes hair in their private regions,” the website copy read. For some reason they forgot to mention that

nobody really likes having the hairs ripped out of their genitalia either.

The self-serving mantra of a waxing salon near me is that “the only hair on your body should be on your head”. This message seems to be the one that is winning. That poor, timid little creature, body-acceptance, offers an alternative to the increasingly unreal, time-consuming, never-ending, impossible, painful, and expensive ideal of feminine beauty.

For the sake of the younger generation, perhaps we should leave one last place for tolerance of the real adult female body to take root and thrive.

So here’s a suggestion. Save your money. Save your suffering. Save the forests.

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