

An uplifting experience

Does your cup runneth over? Then you need a new bra. By Rebecca Lewis.

IT MAY sound like a simple piece of advice, but it's important to keep abreast of your breast issues. Kiwi women will put thought into their skirts, trousers, blouses and shoes — but how often do they wonder whether they're wearing the best bra?

A poorly fitted bra can damage you in more ways than one. It's not just about whether your bra looks nice (and whether you can see the hideous grey or flesh-coloured straps poking out from under your singlet), it's about health. An unsupportive bra can cause back pain, shoulder pain, improper posture, neck pain, shoulder bruises from tight straps, sore breasts, saggy breasts and can create unhealthy breast tissue which could even lead to breast cancer.

There's no substitution for a proper, professional bra fitting. Stylist Jackie O'Fee, who runs Signature Style consultancy and can be seen on TV3's *Does My Bum Look Big In This?*, says many clients have no idea what bra they should be wearing.

Buying good underwear should be the first part of any image makeover, she says, because it affects how your clothes fit to your body. A good bra can be the difference between you looking 25 or 35 years old.

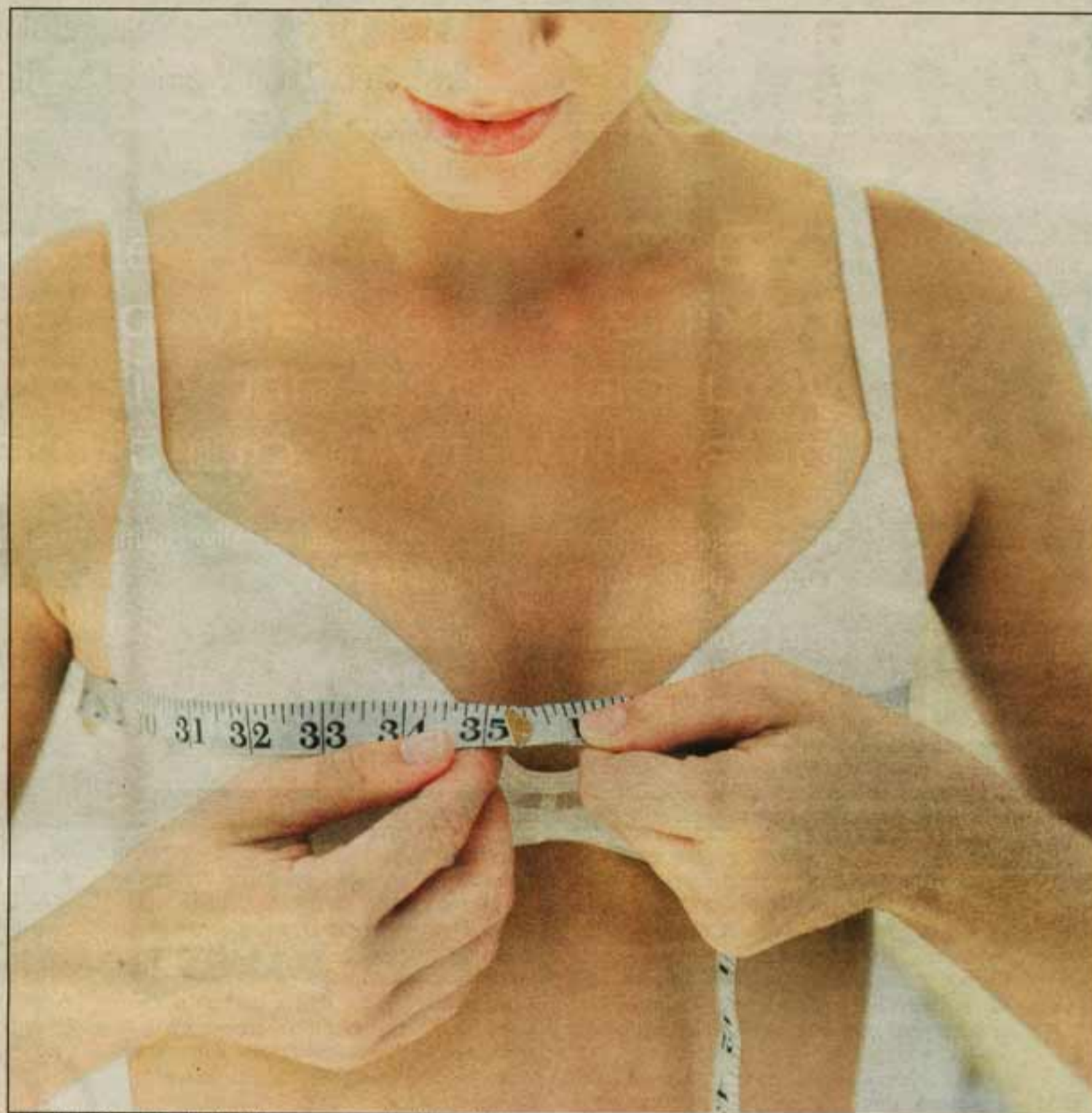
"I went shopping with a client just yesterday who was still wearing a breastfeeding bra, despite the fact that she stopped breastfeeding more than two years ago," says O'Fee. "Buying a good bra is much more than just getting one that is a pretty colour — once you wear a good bra your boobs will suddenly sit up and be that nice melon shape and you'll actually have a waistline. No one wants their boobs in their waistband."

Her tips for getting the right bra include leaning forward so your breasts fill the bra cup, making sure the wire doesn't stick into your ribcage and making sure you have a good sports bra for exercise.

"Also, it's a good idea when you put on a bra for the first time to do it up on the biggest hook. As the bra gets looser over time, you can move it in and make it tighter."

Tips

1. Your bra should not dig into your shoulders — perhaps you need a bra with wider shoulder or thicker straps.
2. It should not ride up your back and should sit comfortably around your rib cage. You can tighten or loosen the band, or you may need a bigger size.
3. Your bra should not leave red marks or indents on your skin.
4. The bra strap should not slip off your



IT'S A BUST: A badly fitted bra can cause health problems.

shoulders. You can fix this by tightening them at the back.

5. The bra cup should sit smoothly over your breasts, with no bulges or slackness.

6. The bra cup should not overflow. If you're spilling out of your bra, it's time to move up a size.

7. The sides of your bra should not bulge and any wires should sit flat and comfortably against your chest.

8. You should replace your bras every six months if you machine wash them. Doing this over a long period of time will alter the shape of the fabric or wires and it will not fit you in the same way.

Does your bra fit?

There's no substitute for a regular visit to a professional bra fitter, but to check your size for yourself:

■ Get a tape measure and wrap it under your bust to get the bra size. Take this measurement in inches. If you get an odd number, add on five inches. If you get an even number add on four inches. For example, an under bust measurement of 32 inches will read a bra size 36.

■ Use the tape measure to get an over-bust reading for the cup size in inches. Subtract the bra size from the cup size.

- 0 = A
- 1 = B
- 2 = C
- 3 = D
- 4 = DD
- 5 = E
- 6 = F
- 7 = FF
- 8 = G

The combination of the two (e.g. 34DD) gives you the bra size you should be wearing.

If you are in doubt, get the bra professionally fitted.

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FAN: Princess Diana enjoyed colonic treatments.

Dressed for success — Jackie O style

Style guru says candidate is being dressed as a girlie girl

BY MARTHA MCKENZIE-MINIFIE

Some of New Zealand's own style gurus have given the thumbs up to Republican US vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin's reported US\$150,000 (\$255,500) wardrobe — and, like overseas commentators, drew comparisons with the late first lady Jackie Kennedy Onassis.

Like Jackie O, Mrs Palin's new look included pearls, blazers with big buttons, jackets with cropped sleeves and side-parted hair.

Coincidentally, the shift dresses favoured by Michelle Obama, the wife of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, also drew the comparison with the late fashion icon.

Jackie O'Fee, director of Auckland image consultancy Signature Style and regular fashion commentator on TV3's *Sunrise*, said the look played up Mrs Palin's femininity and pushed the message of her being a girlie girl.

"They will be hoping, I think, that maybe she's just a girl so she can get away with stupid comments," said Mrs O'Fee.

She said the secretary look was fashionable. By playing it up, it highlighted a point of difference from the opposing camp, which saw Hillary Clinton lose out in favour of Obama.

"All the people who wanted Clinton because they wanted a woman President, can perhaps



ADMIRER: Jackie Kennedy Onassis has long been considered a fashion icon.

PICTURE / AP

look at Sarah Palin and say 'well, there's a woman'."

Mrs O'Fee said the stylists were doing a good job but gave Mrs Palin's "mumsy" and "not styled" hair the thumbs down.

While the cost of the wardrobe was more than the wildest dreams of many a shopaholic, Mrs O'Fee said the price tag was not outrageous.

"This is the woman that they want people to believe is the next US vice-president."

La'qua Image director Susana Tuya said Mrs Palin's look had



evolved with the campaign. Mrs Palin "emerged" in red — a colour that symbolised courage and aggression — then softened her look. "She went in strong, trying to get the attention. If she went in in pale yellow, it wouldn't have got the same message," said Miss Tuya.

Similarities between Mrs Palin's look and that of Jackie Onassis included a focus on jackets and accessory.

"[Mrs Palin] is definitely trying to create the emotion of someone familiar."



BOLD: Sarah Palin "emerged" in red to grab attention before softening her look.

PICTURE / AP

DRESS ONE WOMAN — OR THOUSANDS

Looking work-ready might cost Sarah Palin US\$150,000 (\$257,433) but not-for-profit group Dress for Success does it for New Zealand women for just \$150.

Volunteer and programme co-ordinator Claire Donaldson said the figure covered a donated suit, dress or separates outfit, plus a bag, shoes, jewellery, makeup and, if available, new pantyhose and lingerie.

She said more than 1500 women could be

helped for the reported cost of Mrs Palin's new look.

"We would love to have that amount of money," she said.

The organisation dresses about 2000 women around the country each year, including about 1000 in Auckland.

The upside — for charities in the US at least — was the Republican party's plans to donate Mrs Palin's wardrobe to charity after the race ends.

Dressing to kill doesn't work

Ditch sexy for smart, says **Alice Neville**.

SKIMPY TOPS and sexy stockings are more suitable for the bedroom than the boardroom, says a top image consultant.

Jackie O'Fee said women workers dressing inappropriately was a big problem — with serious implications for employers.

"If your team are all out there looking overtly sexy, it sends the wrong message," said O'Fee.

"We draw conclusions based on what we see — that's the way humans work. You want to make sure people are drawing the right conclusions about you."

O'Fee's company Signature Style visits businesses to talk to staff or individual employees.

Many employers hire her because they don't know how to broach the issue.

"They're concerned that there will be personal grievances laid against them. Because it's such a personal thing, it's a hard conversation to have. It's like telling someone they're smelly."

While O'Fee also works with men, she said women were often harder to deal

with because their image was more important to them.

"We get confused with the whole fashion element. We don't have model bodies but you see all these images of these gorgeous little things and they look amazing."



O'FEE

"We like to believe that we look like that and we lose that sense of perspective because we're really wanting to be fashionable."

US psychologist Peter Glick has researched the way women dress for work and found the more senior their role, the more harshly they were judged.

His study found a woman in a high-status job would be seen as more threatening and untrustworthy and less competent or intelligent if she dressed in a way that was deemed too sexy.

Christine Rankin's employment dispute with Work and Income proved it wasn't just women in lower-level jobs whose clothing attracted attention.

During her bid to be reinstated as Winz chief executive, former top civil servant Mark Prebble told a 2001 Employment Court hearing that, on their first meeting, every time Rankin moved he saw "an embarrassingly large amount of breast exposed".

Eight years on, Rankin declined to comment but O'Fee said short skirts, exposed midriffs and cleavage were still the main problems.

O'Fee recently had to tell one senior executive she was "too sexy".



WRONG: Workplaces are for work.

Modest best

ONE OF O'Fee's clients came to her after a new employee took a business contact out for lunch.

"He rang them back after lunch and said: 'She was lovely, but next time she comes to see me can you ask her to wear something more modest. I felt like I spent all lunch trying to avoid looking at her very ample bosom.'

"That's why they contacted me. They said, 'We can't have these girls thinking it's fashion'."

"I spoke to a group of real estate agents and one was wearing a top that showed her midriff. She was really slim, but that's so not appropriate in the workplace."

O'Fee said receptionists should bend over and check in a mirror. Their low-cut top may look fine to them, but if they're sitting down visitors to the office will be greeted by their cleavage.

"She was wearing fishnet stocking and a pencil skirt and I told her she needed to button her shirt up at least two buttons. It's just not appropriate — you're not at work to find a mate, you're at work to do work."

Auckland University employment law specialist Associate Professor Bill Hodgson said employers were within their rights to tell employees how to dress — within reason.

Concerns about inappropriate dress came up occasionally but were usual among a raft of concerns.

SUCCESS Christine Nikiel

Makeover guru knows value of creating the right image

Building a profile has been one of the challenges for a business that focuses on making a good impression

JACKIE O'Fee is not one to sugar-coat her advice. If that skirt makes your bum look big or your tie is wrong for that suit she'll tell you — but only because that's her job. The founder and director of image consultant Signature Style spends her days advising the sartorially challenged, but says she and business partner Jody Blackwood have never reduced clients to tears a la tough-love style mavens Trinny and Susannah, of reality TV series *What Not To Wear*.

O'Fee set up the company nine years ago, aiming to provide a fresh approach to the makeover market. She's now a well-known style guru with 3800 clients on her database and has worked hard to broker marketing deals with the likes of film distributor Roadshow Entertainment, loyalty programme Fly Buys and Hawkes Bay's Mission Estate Winery.

She's also nabbed several prime-time TV spots, including a makeover of MPs Sue Bradford and Tariana Turia and former United Future MP Judy Turner on TVNZ's current affairs show *Close Up*, and as co-host of TV3's makeover show *Does My Bum Look Big?*

Profile counts in this business and branding is O'Fee's biggest cost. Fortunately she's "not shy".

Roadshow Entertainment approached her with an offer to put her company's logo on all 50,000 *Sex and the City* movie DVDs it distributed from October to January. The logo was also on every point-of-sale poster and the TV ads, and the company had a flyer inside each DVD. O'Fee reckons the advertising was worth about \$40,000 and not something the business could have afforded itself. While the deal didn't net as much business as she'd hoped — "nobody's splashing much cash around at the moment" — during the promotion period the company's website hits rocketed up to about 2500 a month from an average of 500 a month.

O'Fee aligns her business with others that can boost the brand and it generally works both ways. Dating agency Fresh Start regularly sends clients for a 15-minute Signature Style presentation on dress, and she has a relationship with an award-winning Auckland hairdresser.

She and Blackwood also contract a makeup artist.

While for some people clothes don't maketh the man or the woman, O'Fee's clients say dress matters, especially in the corporate world where looking professional could mean the difference between winning or losing business.

Carole Pedder, a partner with accounting firm Withers Tsang, says O'Fee's dress code presentation made staff consider how they looked to other people, and most staff, "most noticeably the men", smartened up afterwards.

Whether you like it or not, people judge others by the way they dress, she says. "When I started working, no way would you have had a huge amount of cleavage showing. You had your work clothes and you had your going out clothes. Now there's no difference. If someone were to have a tattoo and a leather jacket you might not want to

invest your money with them, even though they can do the job."

Signature Style guides people on how to dress appropriately for what they're doing, says Pedder.

There's a misconception that only people who "haven't got a clue" need to go to a stylist, says O'Fee. While some clients "don't have a clue and realise that", others do know what they're doing but just want reassurance they're doing it right.

A former regional sales manager for Vodafone, O'Fee became what she calls a "fairy godmother" to earn cash for a trip to Italy in her early 20s. While doing colours for a hairdresser friend she realised she enjoyed it more than selling cellphones, so on returning from Italy she set up Signature Style. Business didn't take off immediately and she had "no income" for the first few years and worked part-time in newspaper advertising sales.

However, after a "severe boot up the bum" from a friend who told her to get a real job because she'd never make any money, an outraged O'Fee pursued business more aggressively.

Word got around and customer numbers increased, but O'Fee realised her offerings were too one-off. To keep people coming back she invented a series of



SMART GROWTH: Jackie O'Fee is aiming for 15 stores by 2012. Shows like *How to Look Good Naked* (left) have helped business. Picture (Above) / Glenn Jeffrey

sessions, such as the nine-session Rolls Royce style makeover ending in a glamour fashion shoot.

And not everything went according to plan. Her wardrobe planning tool, a seasonal advice guide to be sold through the website, failed to fire, and she sold two out of 1000 that were made "at great cost". Customers found the tool too complex, but rather than dump the idea, O'Fee has incorporated it as part of a bigger service.

In the small image consulting industry, competition is also an issue, she says. She's had a staff member set up in opposition to her, but claims that the popularity of the TV makeover shows has created the biggest challenge: the impression that what she does is easy.

O'Fee, who did a series of short courses in her early 20s on colours, body shape analysis, makeup and how to put

together a wardrobe, says that while the likes of Trinny and Susannah and Gok Wan have been "fabulous for the industry", there are a lot of what she calls "spare room" businesses, or "women who've seen the TV show, read the book, taken their girlfriend shopping and set up business but they don't know enough about colour and body shape analysis".

Men are the untapped market; about 90 per cent of O'Fee's clients are women. The men who do come — one a week on average — are quite open to the idea of improving their image, she says, "once they see there's a methodology to it".

Most clients are Aucklanders but some come from as far away as Hawkes Bay and even Dunedin. O'Fee plans to expand to Christchurch and by 2012 wants to have 15 stores in New Zealand and Australia and 45 stylists. ■

SHOW BIZ: THE UGLY TRUTH

The Boyle phenomenon defies entertainment conventions, writes Susan Pepperell.

THEY'RE CALLING her the frumpy virgin who's slaying them on YouTube. Or the new Paul Potts. Or just downright ugly.

But could Susan Boyle – the 47-year-old Scot competing on *Britain's Got Talent* – have fulfilled her dream of being a professional singer decades earlier if she'd been more blessed in the looks department?

Boyle's newfound status as an overnight sensation – a clip of her singing has been viewed more than 25 million times on YouTube and she's been asked to appear on chat shows hosted by Oprah Winfrey and Larry King – challenges the notion that the superficial world of television and show business rely more on good looks than talent.

She walked out on stage sporting large, bushy eyebrows and hair that hadn't been styled in decades, and she wore no makeup. Looking incredibly uncomfortable in a lacy tube dress, she sang the soul-stirring ballad "I Dreamed A Dream" from *Les Miserables* and, a few bars in, had the audience on its feet.

Her tumultuous reception flies in the face of research that says physical attractiveness boosts success in every aspect of life, and especially in the entertainment industry.

Ingrid Olson, a US psychology professor, has long studied the science of attractiveness. Her conclusions: "In a way, pretty faces are rewarding. They make us more likely to think good thoughts. There are some underlying processes going on in the brain that prejudice us to respond to attractive people better, even if we are not aware of it."

And US author Gordon Patzer, who wrote *Looks: Why They Matter More Than You Ever Imagined*, confirms that people are shallow. His research has found that we judge people by their looks and the good-looking get better paid.

The lesson that attractive people get ahead faster is something Kiwi singer Joe Cotton has learnt the hard way. She was part of the True Bliss line-up, a made-for-TV band for reality show *Popstars*, but was then forced to face up to the reality of the shallow business that is professional entertainment. She was always fair of face, but Cotton shed 38kg after shedding tears on the programme over her weight. "This is a superficial industry," she said at the time.

Sir Howard Morrison understood that too, when he said *New Zealand Idol*'s Rosita Vai was too fat to be a pop star, despite her vocal talents.

Vai went on to win the show but her career has failed to reach the stellar heights of Paul Potts, the tubby British

'Regardless of whether it's fair, pretty people get better jobs.'



Susan Boyle (main photo) and (inset from top) Rosita Vai, Joe Cotton and Paul Potts are in a ruthless business where appearance counts – experts say this reflects human nature.

cellphone salesman with crooked teeth who won an earlier series of *Britain's Got Talent*. He used his winnings to get his teeth straightened.

Auckland image consultant Jackie O'Fee, who presented TV3's makeover show *Does My Bum Look Big?*, says the reality is that "we're visual – it's how we're built".

"Regardless of whether it's fair, pretty people get better jobs. Deep down we think we're not like that, but we are."

But not everyone buys the idea that beauty is a ticket to success in showbiz.

Kiwi showbiz entrepreneur Gray Bartlett reckons Boyle's absence of beauty is a commercial blessing, and he is certain she'll be playing sell-out venues across Europe before year's end.

But Boyle's makeover has already begun. There are already video clips in circulation of her sporting a much more flattering haircut and more stylish clothes, and Bartlett predicts more changes. "Of course it's cynical, but it's show business."

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