

As the CEO of The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, Dr John Flynn has a better overview than most of the changing demographics of cosmetic procedures in Australia.

"The simple answer is yes, there has been an increase in men undergoing cosmetic procedures and surgery," he tells *The Weekly*. "It tends to mostly be eyelid surgery and Botox for frown lines. Liposuction in the abdominal and flanks is popular, as is the removal of what are commonly referred to as 'man-boobs'."

While Dr Flynn says the industry has no definite numbers on exactly what percentage of its clientele is male, men make up "about 25 per cent" of patients at his Gold Coast clinic.

"A large number of them come in for skin cancer treatment," he says, by way of qualification. "However, the increase in purely cosmetic procedures among men has happened for exactly the same reasons we saw an increase in women undergoing procedures 20 or 30 years ago. Social attitudes have changed and cosmetic surgery for men has been destigmatised and more widely accepted."

Dr Flynn says a bout of "abdo lipo" – the removal of fat from the abdominal region – costs anywhere between \$5000 and \$10,000, while the surgical removal of man-boobs will set the average middle-aged fella back between \$3000 and \$5000. All of which seems reasonable given your average flat-screen plasma retails for a couple of thousand dollars these days.

Throw in the fact fitness and diet messages in the media appear with almost as much frequency as alarming stories about the rise of obesity, plus the morphing of such male role models as rugby league and AFL players from beer-guzzling blokes to lycra-clad, perma-toned pin-ups, and the heat is on men to step up.

Paparazzo Darryn Lyons had liposuction to speed up the weight-loss process.

One bloke who has risen to the challenge is flamboyant celebrity paparazzo, Darryn Lyons. Despite his 46 years of age and a body shape that, by his own admission, tends towards the portly, the former Geelong boy sports a set of abs that would be the envy of your average 20 year old.

Darryn – whose naked torso we'll doubtless be seeing plenty of this year in the upcoming celebrity weight-loss TV series, *Excess Baggage* – underwent liposuction to remove fat from his stomach muscles.

"It's the fast way," he explains. "Rather than spend four hours in the gym every day and drink nothing but protein shakes for a year, I had the surgery and sped up the weight-loss process," he says. "Everyone wants to look ripped. It gives you confidence. From a personal perspective, it's been great. I feel like a new man. I'm full of beans."

Yet doesn't all of this surgical intervention point to a disturbing laziness among Australian men? Couldn't the same results be achieved with diet and good old-fashioned hard yakka?

"The problem is that once a man reaches 40, his hormonal make-up alters, making it very difficult for him to shift weight," according to Dr Hkeik. "For some men, surgery is the only answer."

It's certainly an answer that Graeme, 51, from Sydney, has turned to on multiple occasions. In the course of the past 10 years,

Graeme has spent more than \$20,000 on various cosmetic procedures.

He kicked off his self-improvement surgeries with abdominal liposuction to remove "a couple of stubborn love-handles" and has gone back for fillers to correct a slightly crooked smile, an eye peel to reduce wrinkles and "a little bit of Botox".

"Everyone wants to be noticed and complimented," he says. "Particularly when

you get to my age and everyone you know is having a mid-life crisis."

Graeme attributes at least part of the male cosmetic trend to the increasing fussiness of women. "Women are becoming more picky about what they're prepared to put up with," he says. "It's become tougher to go out and attract a partner. You have to put some effort into marketing yourself."

Dr Hkeik believes the rise in cosmetic procedures among Australian men is the result of three distinct factors. "The global financial crisis has seen people focus on themselves," he says. "They

can't control the macro-economic situation, but they can control their own bodies.

"Secondly, job pressure plays a part, with men feeling compelled to look younger in the workplace.

"Finally, lots of procedures are the result of a wife or girlfriend urging their partner to do something about his appearance."

The problem is, like renovating a house, when you repaint the living room it only serves to show up how badly in need of work the kitchen and the bathroom are.

"I've known men who have gotten addicted and gone too far," says Graeme. "Once you fix one problem, it shows up others you didn't know you had. Before you know it, you've had so much work you're no longer yourself. It's important to maintain character in your face."

If 10 years ago it was unimaginable that men would submit to Botox, then does it not hold that in the not too distant future invasive surgery among men for cosmetic reasons could become as much a part of the preparing-for-summer regimen as back-waxing, fake-tanning and general "manscaping" has become today?

If, as Dr Flynn predicts, the three traditional barriers to cosmetic surgery continue to come down (price, availability and social acceptability), what's to say that with summer on the horizon and stubborn winter fat on the hips, legions of blokes won't troop off to the suburban clinic for a spot of preparatory lipo?

"In 10 years' time, if I had fat I couldn't shift, I would absolutely have liposuction again," says Andy. "Whatever it takes to look and feel great, I say." ■

"WOMEN ARE BECOMING MORE PICKY."

