

Cherie Gilmour, January 22, 2025, *The Age* (abridged)

Banning G-strings at public pools is a bummer for some, but it's the right move

While strolling through sunny markets with my five-year-old daughter last week, we encountered a bare bum. Bare bums aren't an anomaly in my kids' lives; quite the opposite. They're an endless source of fascination, whether it's your brother's plump cheeks ripe for whacking, improving your flatuosity or de-panting to run unfettered through a sprinkler. They're everywhere.

But in this case, a woman was wearing a G-string bikini, perusing the homemade candles. "Mummy," my daughter exclaimed, eyes wide, "I can see her bum!" This blew her mind. While bare bums are a hallmark of my daughter's childhood, after her pulling-pants-down-for-a-laugh phase, we've drilled into her: put your bum away; no one wants to see it. How confusing for her to see this fully grown adult getting around in a G-banger [...].

Sure, Michelangelo himself could have sculpted her bottom. Maybe there's some jealousy, given that my bum in a G-string would look like someone trying to hold together a bag of marbles with dental floss. Blue Mountains Leisure Centres recently attracted ire when it announced that "Recognised swimwear does not include G-strings". Cue inevitable outrage and accusations of "double standards" and "policing women's bodies", mainly from influencers whose bread and butter are their reams of mirrored, back-facing selfies wearing only bum floss.

I get it: no one wants to be told what they can or can't wear, and women are particularly sensitive, given that historic sexiness was once a good old ankle flash and propriety was dictated by the menfolk. But if there was a sudden trend for male reverse G-strings, with crown jewels hanging out like overripe plums, you can be sure I would head up the prude squad.

"But everyone in Brazil wears one," I hear you say, "and no one bats an eyelid!" Sure, but Brazilians aren't ancestrally related to the Brits, who invented shame at the same time they invented sandwiches. Asking people to refrain from wearing swimwear designed to make you look naked from behind at a fitness centre is hardly oppressive. If you think it is, have a chat with women from a country where policing their bodies is a literal reality.

[...]

Social media has given us a bum steer. Instead of getting behind serious issues, we produce daily outrage for attention, perhaps similar to the purpose of a G-string. Would an influencer put her perfectly sculpted backside on the line to stand up for the rights of women in countries where failing to comply with veiling laws can lead to imprisonment or death? Or are they too busy making a storm in a teacup about a fitness centre they'll never visit, which requested this small modesty?

We take so many freedoms for granted in the West; being asked not to display the breadth of your booty at a sports centre is a fair call. It's human to gawk at the body parts we've consensually deemed to be our "privates"; even my daughter could tell you what they are. And you cannot convince me that a G-string is a simple fashion statement, not a bid for attention. You can wear whatever you want, but not wherever you want.

[...]