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Australian Story: The Beauty Myth

**Airs Monday, March 21 at 8pm on ABC & iview –
introduced by Mia Freedman, publisher of Mamamia**

Model agent Chelsea Bonner is on a mission, and it's ambitious. She wants to change the way we perceive beauty.

"We've always looked up to what is considered the ideal of beauty, and the ideal of beauty, in my opinion, is...not as close to reality as it needs to be."

While the average size of Australian women has increased over the past few decades, the female image projected in the media remains stubbornly the same: tall, thin and a size 8. Chelsea Bonner wants the media to start reflecting the reality of women today.

"We should not be trying to tell women that they need to be... skinny ...in order to be considered attractive ... We need to have different body shapes as part of our normal culture."

To promote change, Chelsea set up an agency 15 years ago to represent larger models – called 'plus-size'. But the fashion industry saw it as fringe.

Model Robyn Lawley, who signed with Chelsea's agency nine years ago, remembers the early days: *"The fashion high end did not take us seriously at all... Chelsea would send me to castings or send my photos and they just wouldn't look at them"*.

It's an unlikely crusade for a fashion industry insider whose parents were the glamour couple of their day. *'We used to call them Ken and Barbie'*, remembers Chelsea's sister Skye.

Chelsea's mother Nola Bonner was a top model and cover girl. Her father, Tony Bonner, was a famous actor, catapulted to stardom by his role as the chopper pilot in TV series **Skippy**. But being beautiful and famous didn't make Tony Bonner happy.

"I couldn't enjoy it. I have low self-esteem...I grew a beard, I thought growing a beard would help me look more beaten up...and people wouldn't look at me as being a good looking guy."

In ***The Beauty Myth***, Chelsea speaks candidly about growing up in the limelight, about her own battles with weight and self-esteem and how her sense of being an outsider shaped her ultimate choices.

With Chelsea's help, Robyn Lawley has gone on to international success, scoring the covers of fashion bibles *Italian Vogue* and French *Elle*, and blazing a trail for other plus-size models. But even so, Robyn says, gaining acceptance as a bigger model still *'feels like an ongoing battle'*.

Chelsea longs for the day when the word 'plus-size' is no longer used. '*Why can't they just be models?*' she asks.

INTERVIEWS INCLUDE: Chelsea Bonner, Tony Bonner, Nola Bonner, Robyn Lawley, former Vogue Australia editor Kirstie Clements.

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