

## Parents embrace self protection book

Bronwyn Lindsay, Family Planning Queensland

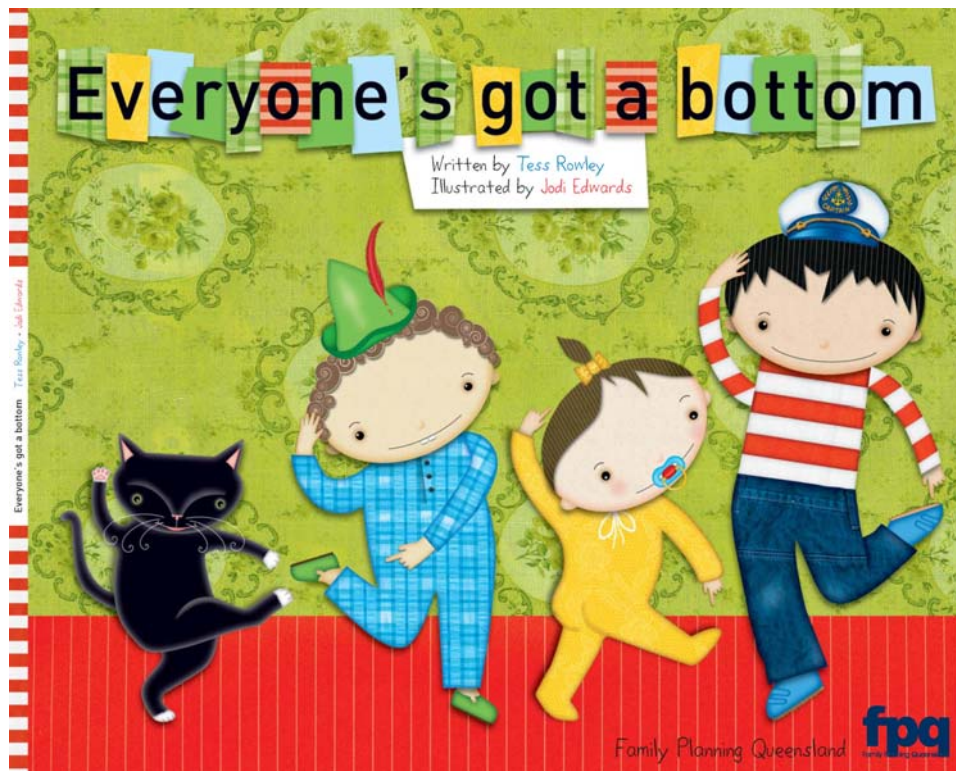
In 2007, Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) developed and released the children's storybook *'Everyone's got a bottom'*. It is a picture book designed for under eights and tells the story of Ben, his brother and sister learning and talking about bodies. It is a story about children keeping safe, crafted as a tool for parents and carers to gently start conversations about body ownership and self protection.

At the time of its launch, journalists warned that parents would find the book too confronting for the intended audience, and suggested teaching children about their bodies was inappropriate for those so young. The use of the correct names for body parts and genitals was considered highly controversial, and attracted criticism from some in the early childhood care sector.

However, with sales now in excess of 10,000 copies, it would appear that the book is supporting parents and carers in this important area of child development.

A recent study conducted by Griffith University found not one of the 1,000 purchasers surveyed expressed any concern that the material addressed in *'Everyone's got a bottom'* would frighten their child. In stark contrast, over half of the children who had been read the title now both engage in, and initiate, conversations about bodies and sexuality.

This experience is also supported by research in this area, which indicates the presence of 'askable' adults as a key protective factor in the prevention of child sexual abuse. Parents and carers who are reading the book to their children are sending a clear message that they do not have to be ashamed of their bodies, and that their bodies belong to them.



As well as containing a serious message, based on research into abuse prevention, the book has been tailor made for little people. It has bright, full-page illustrations and large, simple text making it perfect bedtime reading. The story is fun and positive, and features a repetitive sing-song rhyme children continue to parrot long after the book is closed.

*'Everyone's got a bottom'* is a central component of FPQ's campaign for early childhood sexuality education as a child protection measure and can be borrowed from all Brisbane City Council libraries or purchased from [www.fpq.com.au](http://www.fpq.com.au)