

**Our knowledge is their power when protecting children**

The idea that we can protect kids by pretending sex doesn't exist has been challenged again today by Cecelia Gore, Family Planning Queensland's Director of Education Services.

At the launch of Child Protection Week, Ms Gore commented on recent coverage about *sexting* by school children: "It's far better to respond to these situations by talking rationally with, and listening to, the young people involved. If we want to support children to create positive and safe relationships, responsible adults need to be open and approachable so that children feel confident coming to them to discuss sexuality issues in a healthy way".

"It's silence and shame that hurt kids and put them in positions of vulnerability, not information. We have to talk with children about the safe use of technology and we have to engage with the world that they live in."

Very clear research exists to prove that sex offenders often target children who have not received sex education, preferring children who are naïve about their bodies and unaware of conduct that is considered 'normal' or acceptable.

Research also clearly shows that the presence of 'askable' adults is a key protective factor in the prevention of child sexual abuse. Parents and carers are better served by regularly letting children know that their curiosity about sex is nothing to be ashamed of, and that they can talk about everything with their adult support network.

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicates that approximately one in three girls and one in six to seven boys report sexual abuse in Australia.

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For further information, or to arrange an interview please contact:  
Claire Simpson on 07 3250 0222 or [communications@fpq.com.au](mailto:communications@fpq.com.au)