

New children's book a great start to sexuality education

Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) will hold a Sunshine Coast reading of its first children's book: *'Everyone's got a bottom'* at the Maleny Library on Wednesday 23 May.

FPQ Regional Education Coordinator Jo Stewart said the book was written for children aged between three and eight. She said early childhood sexuality education was vital to preventing child sexual abuse.

'To the best of our knowledge this is the first Australian book for young children, using children as characters, that correctly names body parts,' Ms Stewart said.

'Police statistics show the average child is nine when he or she is first sexually assaulted. Research shows child abuse perpetrators target children with little knowledge about sexuality. Perpetrators start when children are young, so education needs to start as early as possible.'

Police statistics also show the number of reported sexual offences against Queensland children increased from 1,835 in 2004/2005 to 2,087 in 2005/2006. Police stress that this is the number of police investigations and does not represent the extent of child sexual abuse, which often goes unreported. 1.

'This figure is unacceptably high,' Ms Stewart said. 'It's time to get serious about programs and resources that prevent child sexual abuse, including self-protection programs for children which include age appropriate sexuality education.'

'Giving sexuality information in an age appropriate way does not take away a child's innocence: it can help protect children's innocence.'

'Everyone's got a bottom' is a story about Ben and his brother and sister learning and talking about bodies. It is a story about children keeping safe, in a style that is fun and positive and a tool for parents and carers to start a conversation with children about self protection.'

The book is the result of collaboration between FPQ, writer Tess Rowley and illustrator Jodi Edwards. Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs OA and child protection experts from C&K, NAPCAN and QUT's School of Early Childhood have endorsed *'Everyone's got a bottom'*.

Ms Stewart said the book, sold through the FPQ website, had gone into its second print run, due to high demand from parents, carers and teachers around Australia.

1. Queensland Police Service: 'Number of children subject to police investigations into sexual abuse by sex and age of victim, Queensland 2003-04 to 2005-06.'

Book reading details:

When: 3 pm Wednesday, 23 May 2007

Where: Maleny Library, 5 Coral St, Maleny

Picture opportunity: FPQ educator Ellie McAlister will read the book to schoolchildren: Media welcome

Interviews: call media officer Vivienne Wynter 07 3250 0222 or 0419 029 728 or Jo Stewart on 0438 177 804.