

## MEET THE MUM WHO IS DETERMINED TO BEAT EL JAMES

**A** mother and former airline cabin manager turned erotic fiction author is Australia's answer to *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Karen Bleakley, 47, from Sunbury in Victoria, self-published a raunchy title named *Behind Closed Doors: The Society*, a novel she swears will spice up any relationship and warns is "not for the faint-hearted".

Karen says her titillating read will rival EL James' wildly popular erotic-romance trilogy.

"I've never had any formal training, but I always knew I would write a book. I was just waiting for the right time – and I had the idea during the whole *Fifty Shades* phenomenon," Karen tells New Idea.

"I thought, 'Here's this woman who wrote a book that no-one in the industry thought was written very well. And a lot of critics canned the movie and she's still worth \$100 million!' So I knew I could do better."

Karen's saucy novel follows four women with very different kinks as they embark on sexual adventures.

As a mum and wife in her 40s, the first-time author hopes her erotic writing will help older women unleash the sexual creature within.

"I think women get caught up in being a wife and a mother. And our own needs go down the priority list and



Karen (right) with her mum Marisa at the launch of her book in Port Melbourne.

# 'SEX IS MY BUSINESS'

then we forget who we are," Karen explains.

"Sex can be a taboo topic, yet everyone is doing it. The women [in my book] are strong women who know how to ask for what they want and know how to get what they need."

Without a publisher or even an agent, Karen has relied on her husband, kids and own entrepreneurial spirit to get the book publicity. She knows it can be a little dicey mixing business with family – especially when the business is sex.

"My children haven't read it yet. But my son's 17 and I'm sure he's had a few sneaky looks!" Karen laughs. "My daughter has just turned 14 and I made her promise not to read it until she's 30. I did actually give my mum permission to read it but she can't be in the same room with me when she does.

I'm a one woman show at the moment – we have a bit of a production line on the kitchen table and my children help me."

*Behind Closed Doors* has become so popular, Karen's even in talks with a US movie producer. It's all a bit exciting for a woman who's used to packing lunches for her kids while struggling to find time during the day to write.

"Most people that know me are shocked," Karen admits. "And I honestly pinch myself with the success. I can't believe what I've achieved on my own."

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Author EL James. Right: A scene from the movie version.

