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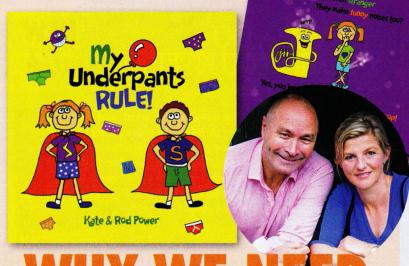
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WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT underpants

t's a subject none of us like talking about, but it's also arguably the most important conversation we can have with our kids: how they can stay safe from sexual abuse.

For generations it's been swept under the carpet, but as the Royal Commission hears heartbreaking stories of lives ruined due to insidious wrongs, we're seeing a new openness.

Coinciding with National Child Protection Week, former policewoman and mother-ofthree Kate Power, together with her husband Rod (above, inset), are launching their book aimed at empowering kids to protect themselves against sexual abuse.

My Underpants Rule! takes a tricky topic and demystifies it. With engaging illustrations and a catchy rhyme, it teaches children that their bodies are their own and not for viewing or touching by others.

'What's under my pants belongs only to me,' the book says repeatedly, 'And others can't touch there or ask me to see.'

'We wanted to build trust and communication between kids and their parents and carers, and decrease the secrets around this topic,' explains Kate, who was disturbed by the abuse she witnessed as

part of her job.
Using her

experience and Rod's background as a corporate educator, the couple guide children through possible scenarios and what they can do if they feel uncomfortable.

Kate says: 'We're trying to teach kids it's OK if you feel that something is wrong, but it's important to tell someone you trust. Kids know what's right or wrong at an intrinsic level.'

The book has already been endorsed by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), the UK's top child-protection agency. But with statistics in Australia showing that one in five children will fall victim to sexual abuse before they turn 18, they hope to turn the tide here.

'Our aim is to have at least a million children empowered by My Underpants Rule!,' Rod says. 'Less, and we're not going to have the effect we need.'

With history and statistics showing so many perpetrators have a close relationship with the abused child, it's imperative we show our kids the why, what and how of abuse. Victims of abuse often become abusers themselves so it's vital we stop the cycle.

Visit myunderpantsrule.com to buy the book (\$15.99 paperback, \$19.99 hardback).

Children's charity Barnardos
Australia will receive 10 per cent of proceeds from each sale.