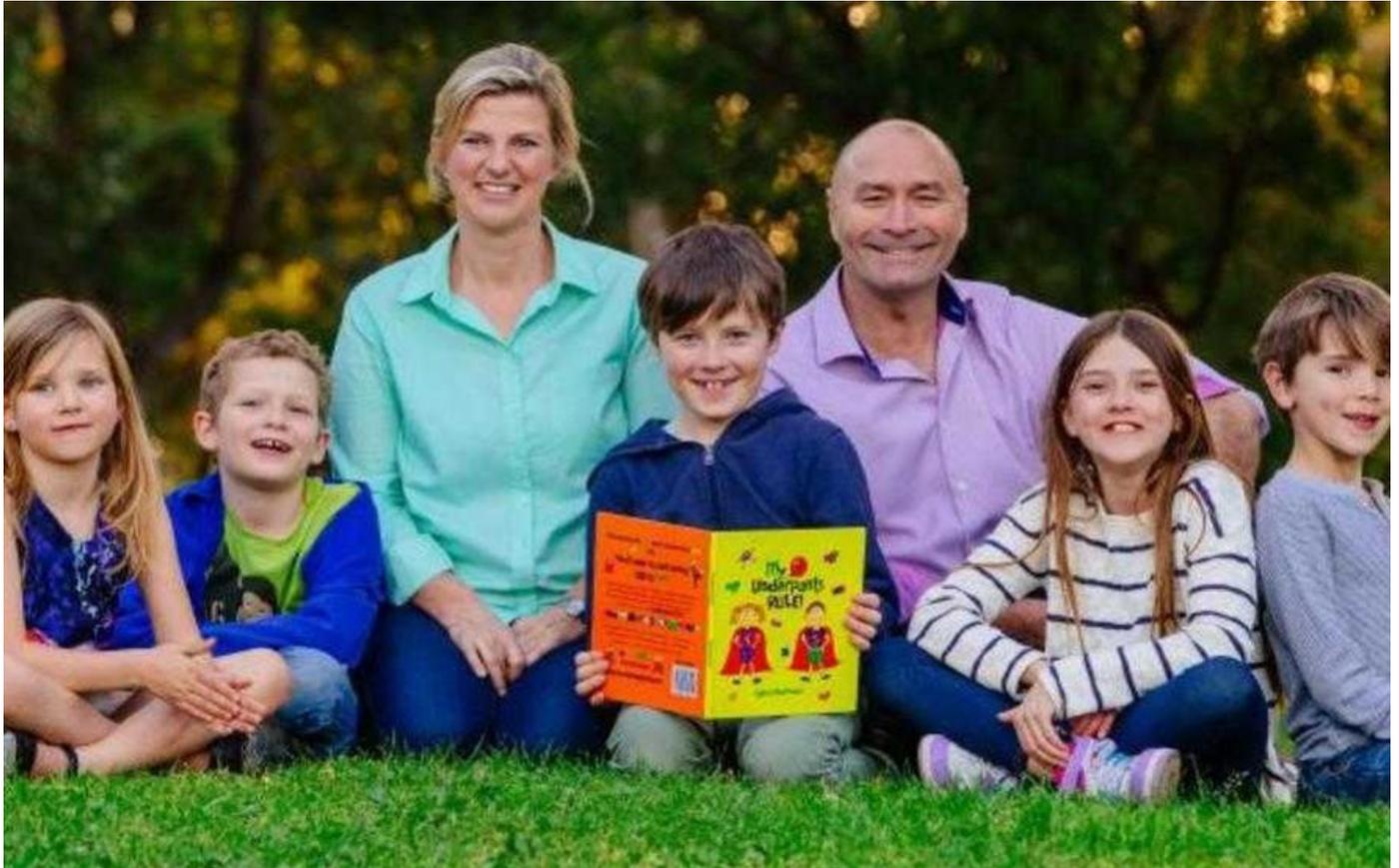


## Book aims to help turn the tide against child sexual abuse

How does one help little children to stand up for themselves against sexual abusers? Jenny Lee chats to former police officer Kate Power who has written a book aimed at kids that's to help parents teach them to recognise inappropriate behaviour and stay safe

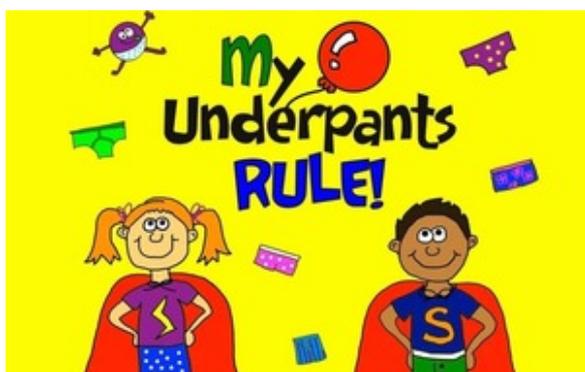


*Kate and Rod Power, authors of My Underpants Rule!, a new children's book that's designed to empower children to protect themselves from sexual abuse through fun and rhyme*

**JENNY LEE**

(<http://www.irishnews.com/other/ourjournalists/2015/05/01/authors/jenny-lee-129994/>)

17 May, 2016 01:00



"THERE are things with funny names that make strange noises but... what's under my pants belongs only to me."

Toilet humour and superheroes combine in a new children's book which delivers a very serious message about the dangers of child sexual abuse. Written by former police officer and mother-of-three Kate Power and her husband Rod, the book aims to empower children to deal with difficult situations through an easy-to-remember rhyme dubbed My Underpants Rule!

Sadly sexual abuse cases against children are continuing to rise. In the year 2014/15 almost 2,000 children in Northern Ireland were identified as needing protection from abuse. The psychological and emotional effects are devastating and can last a lifetime without the right support, as Kate has witnessed at first hand during her 15 years working in her native Sydney.

"Being a female and often the oldest female on duty, I encountered child abuse in first-response policing as well as liaised with agencies. It's far more common than one thinks. The statistics are quite astounding."

As well as Kate's policing experience, the idea for the book came in response to the horrendous headlines surrounding Operation Yewtree, the police investigation into sexual abuse allegations that arose from the abuse of children by media personality Jimmy Savile and others, when the family were living in England for a three-year period.

"My policing experience has shown that that ignorance is the biggest danger for any child when it comes to sexual assault since perpetrators often use a child's innocence against them. You can't protect your kids all the time – so when kids know what is appropriate and inappropriate, they are not as vulnerable," says Kate.

"I don't want my kids to miss out on things like sleepovers or think the world is unsafe, because that's not good for them. People often think child sexual assault is stranger danger, but 90 per cent of the cases are people you know.

"As a mother, I also realised how difficult it can be to talk to children about serious topics without scarring them so we decided to write My Underpants Rule! to give parents, carers and educators a new tool to easily open discussions around sexual abuse with their children."

When Kate wrote the book two years ago, she tested it on her youngest son, who was six at the time. Then, upon returning to Australia a year ago, she further evaluated her book with other children, experts and survivors.

"This book is a prevention book but we garnered views from survivors to see if a book like this would have helped them. One gentleman who had been sexually abused for years said to me: "Boys don't talk about that sort of stuff. I just didn't know it was wrong." Sadly, like many, he thought it was a normal and he had no idea he was being abused.

Aimed at three-to-eight-year-olds, the 26-page illustrated book uses rhyming language, bright colours and child-friendly humour to tell children to scream and shout or to tell someone they trust if they are interfered with in any way, or they are being asked to look or touch someone else's private parts. The book also deals with the point that there may be times when doctors and other professionals may need to examine a child who is unwell.

One of the biggest challenges for the authors was keeping it light despite the serious context and thus they came up with a superhero theme to engage readers.

"I visit schools with my book and one of the activities we do is get the kids to put superhero capes and try to get them to say the underpants rule."

Kate encourages parents to not be afraid of broaching the subject with their children and even having fun and putting a pair of pants on their head or transforming a towel into a cape. "I know it's a very serious subject, but we are all for laughter and fun. I recommend parents sit down once or twice a month with their children and read it just like any other story book. If you are not prepared to say the proper names, leave them out; have a joke with your kid about the funny names.

"By doing this parents can help start a bond of trust with their child which bodes well for the future, so the child isn't afraid to come to talk to you if they are worried about something inappropriate".

Alongside its successful Australian and American launch, My Underpants Rule! is being used by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Northern Ireland Department of Education in their Keeping Safe preventative education project to combat child sexual abuse.

This complements the NSPCC Northern Ireland's on-going Underwear Rule campaign which was launched in 2013 to provide parents of children aged five-to-11 with resources to talk to them about staying safe from sexual abuse in an age-appropriate way.

Kate believes that the internet is responsible for the rise in child sex abuse and plans to write another book on this area for older children.

"Unfortunately lots of paedophiles can group and bond together so easily. Kids can be so easily exploited now, especially with things like Blab video chat, we are seeing more and more of it."

:: For further information or to purchase your copy visit [myunderpantsrule.com](http://myunderpantsrule.com) or purchase at [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk).

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