



MEDIA RELEASE

***A Good Heart* – the new Australian children’s book helping to save endangered Asian elephants globally.**

A Sydney zookeeper who was the subject of national and international headlines after nearly losing her life in 2012 while looking after Asian elephants has released a children’s book titled, *A Good Heart*. All author’s royalties from the sale of the book will go to the global welfare and protection of Asian elephants as these giants of the jungle are listed as endangered due to their decreasing population in the wild.

Lucy Melo has authored an illustrated children’s book titled, *A Good Heart*. The story follows Asian elephants Tukta and her little brother Jai Dee as they make their emotional journey through the Asian rainforest on Jai Dee’s first day of school. Inspired by the special bond shared between a real-life brother and sister pachyderm pair, *A Good Heart* is a powerful story that is equally educational as it is entertaining. Young readers alike will learn all about Asian elephants and discover the many other fascinating animals that can be found living throughout the Southeast Asian jungle.

A Good Heart officially launches in Sydney on Sunday 7 April 2024, and the career zookeeper turned children’s author says the story is perfect for youngsters starting something new, like school. “Young children feeling anxious and worried about starting school for the first time will absolutely identify with Jai Dee as he experiences all the emotions of that first day,” said author Lucy Melo. “Writing this special adventure for young readers 4-12 years, I’ve specifically used words children will need so they can name and express their own feelings. More so because Jai Dee is having the ‘first day’ feelings that so many children will relate to in their lives.”

A Good Heart sees Jai Dee challenged by the other animals in the jungle over the way that he looks and is different to them. Using Tukta’s advice, Jai Dee responds in ways that make him feel good about himself, but importantly, build his self-confidence and resilience.

“It’s been so amazing to work with the extremely talented Sandra Severgnini who illustrated the story,” said author Lucy Melo. “The story of Tukta and Jai Dee will literally burst through the pages for kids who read it or share the book’s adventure with their favourite storyteller.”

Award-winning illustrator Sandra Severgnini has a background in botanical illustration and ran a botanical art gallery in Melbourne for over a decade. Sandra’s passion for picture books dealing with environmental and nature subjects complements Lucy Melo’s *A Good Heart*, bringing sensitivity and humour to her illustrations of the book’s main characters, Tukta and Jai Dee.

Lucy Melo is an authority on Asian elephants. With a Masters in zoology and decades’ experience, Lucy was recruited for her expertise in 2004 to be part of the team that imported and settled five Asian elephants from Thailand in Sydney. Lucy’s work with the public has seen her work with elephants to educate and create awareness of habitat loss, human-elephant conflict, and illegal ivory poaching.

It was during this time working with real-life Asian elephants Tukta and Jai Dee, Lucy observed the remarkable bond between a protective sister and her good-hearted and spirited little brother. It was this inseparable bond and behaviours that provided the foundation for the story, *A Good Heart*.

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