

## ANIMAL TREATMENT

# Book aims to give elephants a voice

When Canberra public servant Nicole Godwin volunteered at a Thai elephant sanctuary, she was looking forward to an amazing experience.

She quickly realised that the brutal truth was far different to the images presented to tourists.

Elephant rides are a tourist staple in Thailand, along with coconuts cocktails and lazy beach days.

But Ms Godwin said many sanctuaries in Thailand were not legitimate, and there were several ways travellers could identify them.

"If you can ride the elephants, it's not a sanctuary, because that's a tourist attraction."

Other telling signs were the use of bullhooks (rods with steel-pointed ends used in the handling of elephants), or elephants made to paint pictures or play soccer.

"That's not a natural behaviour, and what it stems from is the brutal training to tame them or break their spirits," Ms Godwin said.

Now she is writing a children's book to raise awareness and funding for elephant treatment around the world.

Ms Godwin said she was "planting that seed" in children's minds to be aware of the treatment of animals in tourism.

"My motivation is led by my heart to try to be a voice for the elephants, but I am also trying to combine that with making this a business," Ms Godwin said.

She aims to have her first children's book, *Ella*, on shelves in August and will use crowdfunding to achieve that.

The Canberra community has rallied around her as she tries to raise \$8000 from crowdfunding site Indiegogo to fund the book's first print run.

Nicole Godwin with the drafts of *Ella*, which she is crowdfunding to have published and raise money for elephant sanctuaries in Thailand.

Photo: Rohan Thomson



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