

EAST TIMOR HEARTS FUND

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healthy Timor-Leste

Media Release

15 December 2011

NEW HEART AN EARLY CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR EAST TIMORESE PATIENT

A 25-year-old East Timorese university student given life-saving heart surgery in Australia has spoken of his gratitude to Australian doctors and donors for giving him the opportunity to live and contribute to the development of his country.

Marciano Belo was flown to Australia by the medical aid organisation East Timor Hearts Fund earlier this month, and had a double heart valve replacement at Southern Health's MonashHeart in Melbourne this week.

Surgeon Andrew Cochrane performed the procedure pro bono as part of MonashHeart's partnership with East Timor Hearts Fund.

"I am appreciative to all the doctors and donors who have helped me to have treatment in Australia," Mr Belo said.

"My heart disease has been a real danger for my life. Because of it I have been always short of breath, and have had nose bleeds and palpitations. I am always dizzy and have swollen feet. Because of that I always fall down at the school. I cannot study and do my activities at home like helping family.

"If my heart disease can get cured, I will very happy because I am going be normal as my friends and I will think of my future.

"I will study hard and work hard to finish my school and I am going to develop my country. I have a good capacity and I am intelligent person."

Warrnambool cardiologist Dr Noel Bayley, medical adviser to the East Timor Hearts Fund, identified Mr Belo as a candidate for surgery in Australia during one of his regular trips to Timor Leste to run screening clinics.

"Marciano was on borrowed time when I saw him in Dili in July. Without medical assistance, which is unavailable in East Timor, he had very limited life-expectancy," Dr Bayley said

"There are many young people in East Timor like Marciano, who have the hearts of 80 year olds. This is due to childhood rheumatic fever, a condition common in developing countries but largely eradicated decades ago in the affluent west."

Dr Bayley said young people like Marciano had the potential to be "East Timor's best and brightest", and the generosity of Australian donors and surgeons like Monash Heart's Andrew Cochrane gave them "a second chance at life".

Australians have donated \$44,000 in the past year to the East Timor Hearts Fund to assist young people needing life-saving surgery. Corporate supporters include MonashHeart, which is operating on two patients each year and Toll Remote Logistics, which transports patients to Australia.

For information on how to donate go to www.easttimorheartsfund.org.au

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