

EAST TIMOR HEARTS FUND

Australians supporting a
healthy Timor-Leste

27 July 2014

Timorese teen flies 4000k on a heartfelt mercy mission

A Timorese heart patient who was critically ill and too weak to walk a block nine months ago has flown 4000k on a Run Melbourne mercy mission.

Teenager Nina Faria had a life-saving heart procedure in Melbourne late last year provided by community-based medical aid charity East Timor Hearts Fund. She returned this week, determined to run 10k to help other heart patients.

"I want to promote awareness of heart disease, celebrate my new life since the operation and inspire previous and future East Timor Hearts Fund patients," Nina said.

On Sunday the 19 year old will join a team of medicos, Timorese and Australian heart patients and other supporters doing Run Melbourne to raise money for the charity's \$20k for Tomas appeal, launched to help schoolteacher and father of three Tomas Pinto have a life saving heart valve procedure.

"Nina is an inspiration to all of us," board chair Ingrid Svendsen said.

"To go from death's door to running 10k twice a week is just amazing. And flying 4000k from Timor-Leste to mid-winter Melbourne really shows what a big heart Nina has."

Tomas had his procedure last week at MonashHeart, and is making an excellent recovery. The charity is hopeful he will be able to come to Federation Square, and may even be well enough to walk in the 5k event.

"Tomas and Nina's stories have really touched the hearts of Melburnians," Ms Svendsen said.

"The response to the appeal has been overwhelming, and we are now aiming to raise enough to assist another patient."

Because East Timor lacks specialist cardiac facilities, Ms Svendsen said Tomas had long lived with debilitating symptoms, including breathless, blood noses, lethargy and headaches.

"As a devoted father he has also carried the terrible worry that he may not be around for his three young children," she said.

Tomas said he looked forward to being able to return to teaching to support his family, and to doing daily activities like playing basketball again.

"I would like to say thank you very much to the doctors, donors, and everyone who have given me help to make the treatment successful. I can't repay them but I will pray for them so that they can be healthy always."

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