



Ayesha Razzaq (left) and Nadine Hunt have been inspired to run the New York Marathon by the work of Robert de Castella and his Indigenous Marathon Project. Nadine ran the event in 2011 and Ayesha will take part this year. Photo by Jodi Shepherd, Hot Shots Photography.

AYESHA READY FOR MARATHON EFFORT

All the hard work, training and commitment is set to pay off for Ayesha Razzaq when she embarks on 42 life-changing kilometres tackling the New York City Marathon.

Neither a natural runner nor “particularly fast”, Ayesha says she was “one of those people who thought running a marathon is crazy”.

But as she approached a milestone birthday, she thought “it’s now or never”.

“I also came to the realisation I’ve had all these opportunities afforded me in my life and maybe this is my time to help others achieve their own personal goals as well,” she says.

Ayesha is helping others through fundraising for the Indigenous Marathon Project (IMP). She decided to run for IMP after seeing founder Rob de Castella as a guest speaker at a corporate function two years ago, straight after the Boston Marathon bombings.

“As I learnt more about the IMP, I realised it aligned with my personal beliefs and values as well which is really empowerment through fitness to make a difference,” she says.

Ayesha is self-funding her trip to the US and entry fee into the event, so that all funds raised will go to the IMP which aims to promote healthy and active lifestyle throughout Indigenous communities nationally and reduce the incidence of Indigenous disease, as well as create Indigenous

role models and inspire Indigenous people.

“The project is not just about running – it’s about inspiring change, fostering confidence and bringing a sense of achievement to young Indigenous people,” Ayesha says. “Unfortunately many Indigenous communities are affected by health and social issues and they often do not have the tools to counter such afflictions. The IMP uses marathon running as a vehicle to promote healthy lifestyles.”

This will be Ayesha’s first marathon after she got into running about five years ago - coinciding with her appointment as General Manager Retail for ActewAGL.

“I knew that if was going to perform at my peak, I needed to not just be physically robust but also psychologically resilient and capable of adapting to diverse demands,” she says.

“When I started running my first goal was running just 5km which was a struggle. I slowly built that up to 10km then I did the half-marathon and this is my next challenge.

“Everyone says it’s addictive. I think for me, one (marathon) is going to be an achievement and at this stage I am just focused and determined to get to the finish line. It has been an

enormous amount of training and commitment.”

Another benefit of training for a marathon for Ayesha is being a role model to her two sons. She is currently training with her eight year old for a 5km run.

“There’s so much childhood obesity around at the moment and I think it is important as parents to be those role models for your kids,” Ayesha says. “Being a young mum, having a busy life, it is really easy to come up with excuses... I know running is not for everyone but there are plenty of things that people out there can do.”

In terms of fundraising, Ayesha is aiming to raise \$42,195 “to match my equally ambitious target of running the 42.195km marathon distance” and has so far raised over half her target. She is especially grateful for the support of corporate sponsors including RSM Bird Cameron, DB Results, ActewAGL, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Independent Property Group.

The New York Marathon is on 2 November. To support Ayesha’s fundraising campaign for the Indigenous Marathon Project, visit footprints.gofundraise.com.au/page/arazzaq

- Allison Redman
(continued overleaf)