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MEDIA STATEMENT

Fearnley set to inspire Thursday Island ahead of Kokoda Trek

World champion Paralympian and Indigenous Marathon Project ambassador (IMP), Kurt Fearnley, will make an exclusive visit to Thursday Island in the lead up to the 2015 Kokoda Trek with IMP graduate and Thursday Island local, Elsie Seriat.

Fearnley will arrive at the Island on Friday 20 February.

He first completed the gruelling Kokoda course in 2009 and will this year be accompanied by 2014 IMP graduate, Elsie Seriat, taking on the life-changing experience.

“I’m really looking forward to sitting down with Elsie, getting to know her and connecting before we start this journey.

“It’s important to me that I maintain a strong relationship with IMP and better understand the significant impact this fantastic organisation is having on Indigenous communities across the country.

“I share the same passion and value for marathons and living active and healthy lifestyles that IMP is about. I’m committed to sharing the IMP experience of bringing the marathon community into Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities to demonstrate the positive effects running can have not just on individuals but entire communities,” Fearnley said.

Fearnley generously donated an entry to IMP, which then called for expressions of interest from its Graduates.

Ms Seriat was selected to represent Australia, IMP, Thursday Island and Horn Island, on the 96km treacherous adventure after demonstrating her unwavering dedication and commitment to being a beacon of inspiration in her community by continuing to spread the message of living an active and healthy lifestyle.

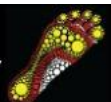
Elsie is inspired by her grandfather who gave his life fighting for Australia in World War II. As a half way point to Papua New Guinea, Thursday Island was a vital strategic location for the American and Australian forces during World War II.

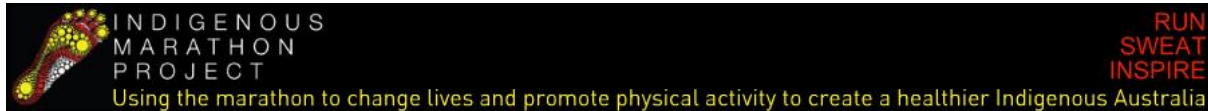
“My Great Grandfather was Private Seriat Charlie who fought in WWII protecting the Island in the Torres Strait.

“He was among 900 Torres Strait Island men who served in the 1941 Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion including A, B, C, D and Pioneer company, which was the first indigenous battalion formed in Australia’s military history. Mostly women, child and elders were left on the outer island communities.

“To be selected to represent IMP to trek Kokoda with IMP ambassador, Kurt Fearnley, is surreal.

“I am humbled, honoured and privileged to represent Thursday Island, Torres Strait and indigenous Australia, especially in commemorating 100 years of ANZAC. The spirit of Kokoda will be another emotional journey after





completing the New York Marathon but at another level considering the history and personal connection behind this trek,” she said.

Kurt’s advice to Elsie is less about running and more about the experience.

“Kokoda is about the surroundings and the emotional benefit. The positive emotional experience is more important than running or walking. It’s something very special,” he said.

The 96km, nine day trek begins on 17 April with participants reaching Kokoda on 26 April.

An especially significant year, April 25 2015 will mark the 100 year anniversary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli.

The IMP is a not-for-profit foundation established in 2010 by world marathon champion, Robert de Castella. Each year IMP selects 12 young Indigenous men and women (aged 18 to 30yrs), to train for the New York City Marathon and through their achievements celebrate indigenous resilience and success.

The IMP relies on the generous support of the Australian Government Department of Health, Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, Qantas, Sports Cover, Accor, Good Oil Films and the generosity of the Australian public.

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Communication and Fundraising Manager: Kellie O’Sullivan (02) 6162 4750 or 0437 699 950.

More information about IMP can be found at www.imp.org.au or visit our Facebook page, The Marathon Project.

