

Mele Tau'ese

LIVED EXPERIENCE: Transplant, Cardiology, Respiratory



Mele's story is a true rarity. At 14 years old, Mele collapsed at school and was taken to hospital where they treated her for pneumonia, however as her fatigue continued so did the investigations - before discovering something more sinister. Mele was diagnosed with Eisenmenger's syndrome which is a complication of a congenital (from birth) heart defect with that affects the blood flow through the heart and lungs. As the years past and her condition deteriorated, it became clear that her only chance of survival was a double heart and lung transplant - a surgery too complex to be performed in New Zealand where Mele was living. After gruelling tests, conversations, ethics committee approvals, funding approvals from both Australia and New Zealand and an in-person assessment, Mele was added to the transplant list and travelled to Australia in December 2019 to wait for a compatible donor. The wait extended through the peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic, until in July 2020 she received the call that she was waiting for, and within 10 hours was receiving a new heart and lungs. After a long, complicated surgery, and additional surgery 2 days later, Mele embarked on her recovery process before returning to NZ months later. Mele has faced her mortality in ways many haven't, as well as having an indescribable experience of complex, life-changing transplant surgery away from her home-country and support network during a global pandemic. An incredible speaker, mentor, advocate and determined woman, she leads her life with an indescribable energy and drive that is second to none. Mele is incredibly passionate about sharing her experiences, improving holistic support for people going through transplants, improving care for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as increasing awareness for Eisenmenger Syndrome.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCE:

- Speaker for HeartKids New Zealand
- Podcast Guest
- Bachelor of Business (Marketing & Advertising) graduate

LINKS

- [Mele Tau'ese Feature - HeartKids New Zealand](#)
- [Melesiu Tau'ese Double heart & lung transplant patient - Podcast Pacific Media Network Tonga](#)

KEY INFORMATION

Place of Birth: Vava'u, Tonga

Current location: Auckland, New Zealand

Age: 32 years old

Cultural Background: Tongan

Language/s: English, Tongan

LGBTQIA+: No

Diagnoses: Heart and Double Lung Transplant (2020), Eisenmenger Syndrome, Pulmonary Hypertension

Healthcare Access: Primary Health Care, Secondary, Tertiary and Quaternary care