

a knee so a girl from Vanuatu can giggle at walking for the first time



Kylie Cyrus is one of more than 400 international children given a better life by Moira Kelly's Children First Foundation. The Foundation was established in 1999 to support the humanitarian work of Moira Kelly AO, who is now the charity's ambassador. Call 1800 99 2299 or go to www.childrenfirstfoundation.com to book or to make a donation and help other children like Kylie.

Look what I've got: At school with friend Ella, and proudly showing off her new prosthetic leg.

Pictures: MANUELA CIFRA

the nation's only public hospital when Kylie was one month old.

Without MRIs or other tests, a doctor took one blurry X-ray and told the worried parents Kylie was growing new bone in her hip, the bone in her thigh was still growing and her leg would grow into a normal, functioning limb.

Without any money, Tavock had to work for more than three months to earn enough for the return journey.

"They told us her leg would still grow the bones," Lissing said. "It is very sad ... they told us they couldn't help, so we just brought her back and pray harder that one day she

would get an operation."

Despite her extreme deformity and obvious difficulty, that unhelpful visit remained the only time Kylie had set foot in a hospital until arriving in Australia.

"When she was three years old we were surprised she could walk with her other leg," Lissing said.

"She goes climbing, running, swimming. She has lots of fun with the other kids. The other kids laughed at Kylie, so now they have to help her by carrying her to school and back.

"When I saw them carrying Kylie my heart was filled with joy.

"It is something that God has given us, for that little

child to be in our family."

But watching Kylie walk, it is difficult to understand how she does it — especially when she carries her younger sister Qwen along the most rugged paths.

While her left leg is well formed below the knee, above it she has only a tiny femur which juts out, throwing her hips and back out of shape.

When he talks about the lack of medical support, Tavock's anger is hard to contain. But when he talks about Kylie's schooling, he glows with pride. While most on the Masculin Islands are content to live as simply as possible, only working when they need an extra luxury or tuition,

Tavock is determined Kylie must find a job and use her potential to lead her village.

"I am very proud of her. Kylie is always giving me the idea that she will do very, very good in the future," he said.

The breakthrough came when Sally was put in touch with Moira Kelly's Children First Foundation.

"It was such a long process and there were times when I gave up," Sally said. "When Children First finally sent me an email saying they were accepting Kylie it was better than winning Tattsлото."

At the start of 2011 the family again travelled to Vila and it took them February, March and then

April to convince authorities of Kylie's existence, then get her a birth certificate, passport and eventually the visa needed to get to Australia.

MAY 2011

NO matter where you go on the island you hear the same noise — the pure, unadulterated joy of children laughing, playing and enjoying life.

But there is a much more sinister side to life here hidden beneath the surface — and it is one that offers an all-too-real clue about what Kylie's future may be without surgery.

John Balias — the son of one of the island's black magic practitioners —

explains what many on the island think. Local custom says the devil Bilkandur is trapped under ancient stones on the island. Many believe Kylie's father moved the stones and, as a result of a curse, she was born with a deformity. "Tavock removed out the stone, that is why something happened to Kylie — it is our explanation," John says.

"Some people have been born here long ago with handicaps, but they are normal handicaps, not the same as this.

"We have never seen one like this leg. She has her punishment because of what her father did."

Continued Page 26

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