

2024 - 2025 Annual Report

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

ABN: 76 073 229 523 INC.NO: A0015737N

Email: hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Website: www.heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Facebook: facebook.com/heartbeatvictoria



In the spirit of reconciliation, Heartbeat Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. We issue this report acknowledging country.

Heartbeat Victoria

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. [Heartbeat Victoria] is an association incorporated under the Association Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic). It is a charitable institution and is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient. Heartbeat Victoria is the umbrella organisation for Heartbeat Victoria Affiliates and Branches that provide heart peer support across Victoria. Heartbeat Victoria is run exclusively by volunteers.

As a leader in community-based peer support for those living with heart related conditions, we seek to raise awareness of the importance of community-based peer support in improving the quality of life for those living with heart related conditions.

Our Mission

To foster an active, compassionate and inclusive peer support network in Victoria for individuals and families affected by all forms of heart disease and heart-related issues.

Through our community driven groups, we provide emotional support, share information, advocate for better health outcomes and raise funds for cardiac equipment and improved cardiac care.

Our Vision

Every individual and family affected by heart disease has access to a compassionate community, vital resources, and the highest quality of care, enabling them to live empowered heart-healthy lives.

Our Values

Respect	Empowerment	Collaboration	Hope
We recognise and value the dignity of every person and we value diversity of experience and thought.	We support our members to make informed decisions for themselves through connection, information and membership.	We work with others to acquire knowledge, to build connections and share information for the benefit of members.	We cultivate optimism and resilience, inspiring individuals and families to look forward with confidence.

President's report



2024-2025 has been another very busy year for Heartbeat Victoria and its Board. Three new Board members have brought experience and enthusiasm for heart health and peer support, helping to promote Heartbeat Victoria and to strengthen the organisation's community connection and growth. Board members, affiliates and branches have also worked to form and promote two new groups, the Baker walking group and Tatura heart health support and walking group. Both these groups will widen the reach of Heartbeat Victoria and help spread the heart health message with new memberships.

During the year, the Board has engaged in meetings with peer support organisations, research teams, and hospitals, making valuable connections. Ongoing meetings have also been held with The Heart Foundation in relation to co-badging walking groups and the use of their platform to further engage with cardiac consumers and grant opportunities.

To all Board members who have volunteered their time this year, thank you for your work and energy. Our strategic plan for 2024-2027 is now in place and together we are working toward a full and rewarding 2026.

To the affiliate and branch office bearers working in the regional areas, thank you for your ongoing work and for making Heartbeat seen in the public space. We have seen an increase in enquiries through the website and other communications, and this can be attributed to that public awareness.

Some Board members undertook training during the year to better manage the website, and this has also been of great benefit. We are now viewing statistics relating to visits to the web page and time spent, helping us to make decisions and keeping the news and information on the website current. Thank you to the affiliates and branches who send information, photos and dates of activities - it's great to hear about and promote your activities. Please take the time to visit our website and engage with the information and activities available.

I recommend the book "In A Heartbeat" by Rachel Jane Cassidy, which features case studies on various cardiac conditions and their life impact.

Research and education are key to changing the future. Only those with heart conditions understand the impact of such a diagnosis. Heartbeat Victoria supports individuals and families affected by cardiac issues, but real change requires sharing personal experiences and participating in research to improve care and decision making. If you are interested in knowing more about being involved in research, please contact me via christine@heartbeatvictoria.org.au It is worth it to change the future of cardiac care.

Some heart disease has a genetic or familial connection, putting families at higher risk. Heartbeat Victoria encourages everyone aged 45 and over (or 35+ if Indigenous or diabetic) to get a free, quick HEART HEALTH CHECK. Talk to your doctor to learn your risk factors and have the check and encourage family members to do the same.

Christine Rees - President

The Board

President	Christine Rees
Vice President	Barry Nixon
Secretary	Vivien Williamson**
Treasurer	Karen Saccuzzo
Board Member	John Allen**
Board Member	Elaine Gregory**
Board Member	Andrew Murphy*
Board Member	Kevin Reid
Board Member	Rebecca Ritchie
Board Member	Vanaja Thomas**

* Appointed as a Board member in July 2024

**Newly elected Board members at the 2024 AGM

Board report

Membership

In July 2024, the Board appointed Professor Andrew Murphy as a Board member. At the Board's Annual General Meeting in September 2024, Christine Rees was elected as President and Barry Nixon as Vice President and new Board members John Allen, Elaine Gregory, Vanaja Thomas and Vivien Williamson were elected for two-year terms to the roles shown above. Since then, in May 2025, Professor Rebecca Ritchie was appointed to the Board.

The Board particularly wishes to acknowledge and thank Robyn Fennell and Gail Newton for their service on the Board. Robyn rejoined the Board after serving on it for over thirty-five years previously and generously shared her knowledge and wisdom with what was a totally new Board. Gail brought an important small branch perspective and valuable contribution during her shorter term on the Board. As both decided not to stand for re-election at the 2024 AGM, the Board extends its appreciation to Robyn and Gail for the time, energy, and expertise they have shared, and the positive difference they have made to our organisation and its members and which they continue to do at their respective branches.

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

In December 2024, the Board adopted a strategic plan for 2024-2027. In addition to the mission, vision and values referred to earlier, the Plan includes the following three strategic directions and related goals. The Board has also developed an action plan to identify priorities and specific actions in relation to each goal.

Supporting and strengthening	Fostering connections	Dynamic leadership
To strengthen our foundation and expand our impact by supporting our network, fostering growth and enhancing the quality of peer support.	To build and foster strong organisational and community connections and collaborative partnerships that will build cardiac related peer support.	To provide dynamic and responsible leadership which will build capacity, elevate our impact and guide our mission with clarity and purpose.

Highlights from the Heart

Our key achievements in 2024–25

In addition to developing a new Strategic Plan for Heartbeat Victoria, which will guide the Board's activities over the next three years, the Board's achievements have included the following.

Supporting and strengthening

As a step towards its goal of consolidating and strengthening existing Heartbeat peer support groups, the Board is keen to work with each Heartbeat group to identify their needs and priorities, and opportunities for support from Heartbeat Victoria. In order to facilitate that, some Board members have recently been nominated as Branch buddies, currently:

Ballarat – Andrew Murphy

Bendigo – John Allen

Goulburn Valley – Vivien Williamson

South Gippsland – Christine Rees

Sunraysia – Christine Rees

Visits to some groups have already commenced and the Board members have been able to experience group activities and some of the challenges faced firsthand.

In addition, in order to better respond to the needs of non-members in relation to their peer support, the process of responding to and following up enquiries, received via the Heartbeat phone number and Hello@email relating to peer support, has been formalized and all calls and emails are recorded as part of the Board's correspondence.

Fostering connections

In delivering its goals of continuing to build relationships with existing partners and considering opportunities for new partnerships that would benefit Heartbeat Victoria, during the past year:

- The Board has continued to work with SOLVE CHD and the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute connecting researchers with the cardiac community and publishing important information provided by the Baker in its quarterly newsletter Heartbeat Happenings.
- Heartbeat Victoria joined as an affiliate of the Global Heart Hub. The Global Heart Hub works to raise awareness and understanding of heart disease, share best practices and treatment guidelines, uplift patient voices, and drive tangible change to policy and practice through a network of affiliates and advocates.
- Jean Hailes Heart Health Week has been promoted via Heartbeat Happenings.
- President, Christine Rees gave presentations and attended various events, including:
 - Presentations for the Manningham Rotary Club; Wellsprings for Women; Deakin University Health and research staff; Mildura Base Hospital; and Women's Health Collective;
 - Meetings with the Global Heart Hub; Professor Rebecca Ritchie; Medical Research Future Fund; Targeted Translation Research Accelerator for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease; Pulse Point Academy; and author Rachel Cassidy; and
 - Attendance at "In a Heartbeat" book launch; Bright Spark Lunch at the Baker Institute; and a television interview at the Victorian Heart Hospital.

Dynamic leadership

In pursuit of its goals of building the skills of Board members and strengthening communication and engagement with key stakeholders, during 2024-2025:

- The Board has commenced work on developing updated branding materials.
- Board members have undertaken training in website management and the Google suite used for the organisation's document management and communication.
- Resources relating to heart health have been shared with members through Heartbeat Victoria's newsletter, Heartbeat Happenings, and by direct email to members.

Acknowledgements

The Board acknowledges the passion, commitment and magnificent work of affiliates and branches for their communities, as well as the challenges that they face. The Board thanks all members for all they have done during 2024-2025 to assist those with heart-related conditions.

Our affiliates and branches

	Branch or Affiliate	Membership at 30/06/2025
Heartbeat Ballarat	Branch	105
Heartbeat Bendigo (Inc)	Affiliate	86
Heartbeat Goulburn Valley	Branch	43
Heartbeat South Gippsland	Branch	15
Heartbeat Sunraysia (Inc)	Affiliate	10
Latrobe Valley	Establishing	-
Grampians	In recess	-

Our affiliates and branches have continued to rebuild much needed peer support for members with heart-related health issues through meetings, social, physical and fundraising activities. For some, however, access to inpatient and cardiac rehabilitation has remained a struggle.

During the year there has also been an increase in affiliates and branches having access to government grants, as well as using other local community groups to support their fundraising.

Heartbeat support and activities

During the past year, affiliates and branches have provided:

- Information and discussion sessions covering topics of relevance to members' health issues and sharing their stories.
- Tailored newsletters addressing heart-related community information.
- A point of contact (by phone) or email for people experiencing heart-related health issues for the first time.
- Volunteering at cardiac rehabilitation programs to raise awareness of peer support available in the local community. However, access to these programs continues to be compromised following Covid restrictions.
- Walking groups, in collaboration with the Heart Foundation, to support exercise for heart health and maintain motivation.
- Fundraising through a range of initiatives, including can collection recycling, Bunnings sausage sizzles and raffles.
- Social activities to support and connect members and share information.
- Regular dinners, meetings and forums with a variety of specialist speakers, covering health and community issues.
- Donations to community facilities and local hospitals of equipment, including defibrillators, holter monitors, sets of scales, treadmills and blood pressure machines, to support local cardiac services.

Sunraysia

Throughout the year, our monthly Cuppa Catch-ups have been really enjoyed and provide a great opportunity to socialise. Our monthly meetings have also been a great chance to learn, chat and enjoy a lovely meal together after the meeting, and we have also enjoyed special events, such as our annual Christmas dinner.

Our fundraising has continued strongly, with a Xmas in July raffle, funds raised at the Wentworth Show from Mallee Sunset Ute Club Inc, and from our participation in the Murray 2 Moyne cycle relay, which is generously supported by Almond Australia.



Thanks to Heartbeat Sunraysia, the community of Ouyen has acquired a fourth publicly accessible automated external defibrillator (AED) which is located at the Ouyen Men's Shed and is accessible to the public 24 hours.



During the past four years, Heartbeat Sunraysia is proud to have funded about a dozen AEDs across the Mildura local government areas.

Planning has also commenced for the 40th anniversary of Heartbeat Sunraysia in September 2025. Our members have enjoyed reading and looking at all the old minutes and photos and the donations given by the group to our Sunraysia area during those 40 years, which are definitely a credit to everyone who has been involved.

Very sadly, our long-term member and President, Jeff Gregory, passed away in May this year. Jeff was an amazing worker and leader for Heartbeat Sunraysia and Jeff's work with our members to mark the 40th anniversary of the branch will continue.



South Gippsland



Heartbeat South Gippsland, although a very small group, continues to hold monthly meetings on the third Friday of each month, at the Austral Hotel, Korumburra, followed by lunch. We continue to enjoy the social connections and the opportunity to chat and share experiences.

This year the branch was approached by Jeetho Hall about supplying a defibrillator and has agreed to pay half the cost.

Jeetho Hall is a beautifully renovated 125-year-old hall now used for weddings, private celebrations, corporate functions and performances, but previously, the first Shire offices for the local municipality. The defibrillator is expected to be installed soon.

Goulburn Valley

Social activities and information sharing



Goulburn Valley continued to schedule coffee mornings and dinner meetings throughout the year to socialize, as well as to share heart health information. In September 2024, the dinner meeting was scheduled to coincide with

Heartbeat

Victoria's Annual

General Meeting and members were able to tune into the speaker and meeting via Zoom.



Fundraising



Fundraising activities during the year have included a Bunnings BBQ fundraiser, as well as a Christmas theme dinner fundraising event at the home of the President, with monies raised for the branch's cardiac equipment fundraising program for Goulburn Valley Health.



Cardiac Rehabilitation

Members also continued to volunteer at Goulburn Valley Health's Cardiac Rehabilitation program, providing tea and coffee after the exercise program, as well as information packs and newsletters in relation to Heartbeat Goulburn Valley and the heart peer support it offers. A presentation about the branch is also provided during the eight-week program.

Heart Health Week 2025

The Heart Foundation, National Heart Health Awareness Week – 'Never Miss a Beat,' May 5-11, 2025, provided an opportunity for the public and health professionals to have a conversation about heart health and to take positive steps to reduce their risk of heart disease.

During Heart Health Week in Tatura, more than twenty community members gathered for a Heart Health Information Session at Tatura Community House - a partnership between Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Branch and Goulburn Valley Health. The session provided presentations that focused on understanding heart disease risk factors, the importance of prevention, and how to take practical steps towards a healthier lifestyle, including the delivery of Heart Health Checks for more eligible people.



New and Exciting - Heartbeat in Tatura



As a result of information provided at the Heart Health Information Session, a new Tatura Heart Support Group has been formed, as well as a walking group in association with the Heart Foundation.

In June, Heartbeat Goulburn Valley - Tatura, heart peer support, had its first get together. The group plans to meet monthly and weekly walking groups are also planned.

Recognition and appreciation

As part of National Volunteer Week- Connecting Communities 2025, to acknowledge and thank all its volunteers for their significant contributions helping in many areas of the health service, a letter of thanks and certificate in recognition of years of service were presented to all Goulburn Valley Health volunteers, including Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Cardiac Rehabilitation volunteers.

Bendigo

Although we have are still not able to access the local hospitals and cardiac rehabilitation programs to the same extent as pre-Covid, the Branch's meetings, social events and fundraising efforts are continuing.

Activities

Bimonthly general meetings continue to be held on the third Sunday of each month.



Members have also enjoyed participating in a comprehensive calendar of social events, including coffee catch ups, seasonal lunches, morning music concerts and fashion events, as well as the traditional Christmas in July and December Christmas events and the compulsory raffles at most events.



In order to ensure the affordability and viability of some of the events previously offered, the Bendigo Domain Country Club also invited Heartbeat members to join its residents on outings that it arranged for the enjoyment of its residents, including trips to Melbourne for shows and bus excursions, which are more affordable for larger groups.

Donations

During the year, Heartbeat Bendigo was also pleased to have been able to formally present major donations to:

- Dhelkaya Health in Castlemaine - \$14,500 for the purchase of three portable ECG machines for their three aged care facilities;



- Inglewood and Districts Health Service - \$11,000 for a treadmill for the cardiac rehabilitation area; and

- Bendigo Hospital - \$10,000 for a medical grade treadmill for the cardiac rehabilitation area.



Fundraising

Once again, Heartbeat Bendigo has been generously supported by a local community group – Bendigo Country Music, which ran a special event that raised \$500 in support of Heartbeat Bendigo.

Members also sold tickets for the Rotary Christmas raffle, which raised \$2,500 for the group.

Thanks to a \$4,000 grant Volunteer Grant from the Federal Government, via Lisa Chester MP (Member for Bendigo), Heartbeat Bendigo has been able to purchase a range of equipment to support the group, including a Square terminal for card payments, a cordless sound system and microphones, an overhead projector for use at meetings, and office equipment to support our hard-working Treasurer.

Heartbeat Bendigo was also thrilled to have been able to facilitate a successful application



to the Kangaroo Flat Community Enterprise for funding of a \$3500 Automated External Defibrillator, for the Chum Street Uniting Church, where the group holds its monthly meetings.

Recognition of Members

In March, Heartbeat Bendigo was pleased to present Certificates of Appreciation to two committed and long-serving members of the Group.



Laurie Smith, a member since 1999, has been an active Committee member and Eddie Williams, a member since 2001, has been the Heartbeat representative at St John of God Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation since 2006.



Ballarat

New President and Social Committee

New additions to Heartbeat Ballarat have been a new President (Mark Vorstenbosch) and a new Social Committee, elected at the Branch's February AGM.



The new Committee has organised a variety of new outings, many at no or little cost as well. Numbers have been stunningly on the rise and the variety means there has been something for everyone. Connection is so important to wellbeing and there have been so many opportunities for Ballarat members, including monthly lunches, nursery visits, morning teas, music concerts, movie outings and a picnic in a spectacular botanic location.

Bus trips with the Ballarat City Council funded Ballarat Aging Well team have also included the Melbourne Flower and Garden Show and the incredible

Melbourne LUME Exhibition and theatre productions, including Kinky Boots.



Social outings greatly add to the involvement of all members. There was even a cruise in November 2024.

Growing membership

Recruiting members via Cardiac Rehabilitation referrals and being very active on social media has seen Heartbeat Ballarat's membership grow in 2024/2025. Many folk initially come for the exercise but stay because of the great social connection.

In June this year Heartbeat Ballarat nominated its first life member in Barry Nixon. Barry has been tireless in his efforts in relation to heart health and peer support in the Ballarat community.



Raising awareness



There have been numerous efforts by members to spread the word about heart health - the Ballarat Ageing Well Expo in March, the Sons of the West stand regarding heart health for the Western Bulldogs and a Charity Expo at Delacombe Town Centre, to name a few. Raising awareness, meeting people, and answering questions regarding heart health and prevention are such important activities.

In March 2025, a promotional video highlighting Heartbeat Ballarat peer support, exercise and social connection, coordinated by Daniel Olosoji, Community and Content Coordinator, at the Baker Institute, was released and is used in cardiac rehabilitation education programs

Peer support

During the year, peer support was constant, with many Ballarat members having surgeries, being hospitalised, or having a stay at home in the sick bay. Covid, influenza, shingles and measles were active in Ballarat, and affected our members, some multiple times. We are seriously proud of the way Ballarat members support each other, learn from, and educate each other.



Walking for heart health

Heartbeat Ballarat continues to provide four walking opportunities each week, all with coffee catch ups. Encouragement awards are frequently presented to deserving achievers and Assistant Secretary, Ross, has been awarded this year for completing 870 Heartbeat walks as Walk Leader.



In October 2024, a memorial walk was held to remember and honour former member Kevin Tolhurst on the anniversary of his passing. Kevin was an active Heartbeat Ballarat volunteer educator and shared his patient journey at cardiac conferences.

Fundraising

With the assistance of Bunnings, and a Heartbeat Ballarat Bunnings Sausage Sizzle, 110 sets of scales were donated to Grampians Health in March 2025. Bathroom scales prevent rehospitalizations when utilized by heart failure patients. There is a need for approximately 200 electronic bathroom scales annually in Ballarat. Heartbeat Ballarat has been meeting this need for several years now.

Something different during the year was Heartbeat Ballarat's first participation in a SparkTank funding event hosted by Community Bank Buninyong, where community groups pitch for grant funds. Heartbeat Ballarat received \$1,500. The annual Heartbeat Bowls Tournament in January 2025 held by Ballarat Bowls Division also raised \$5000 for Grampians Health and the St John of God cardiac unit.

Research

Nick Kashyap, a researcher from the Baker Institute, has been catching the train to Ballarat most Fridays to interact with members and encourage Heartbeat Ballarat members to answer a few questions for a research project he is working on. The study explores how people are self-managing cardiovascular disease using apps, the internet, and communications like email, text messages etc. The goal is to design health apps that are more sensitive and effective in supporting patients living with cardiovascular disease.



Sad News



The Committee and members of Heartbeat Ballarat, and the Board of Heartbeat Victoria were extremely saddened by the sudden death of Mark Braybrook in August 2024.

Mark was a Board member of Heartbeat Victoria and a longtime Heartbeat Ballarat Committee member.

Grampians

The Grampians Branch is currently in recess. The Board has been in touch with some members and is looking forward to meeting them to confirm their plans for the future.

Latrobe

It has been disappointing that due to the impact of Covid, the re-establishment of the Latrobe branch did not occur as planned. The Board will continue to work towards developing contact with the appropriate community and health services to re-establish this group and would value the support of any services in this region willing to assist in the establishment of a heart health peer support group.

Our financial report 2024 – 2025

These accounts are the final accounts for the 12 months ending 30 June 2025 for Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc (HBVCI).

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc – Alone accounts, not consolidated

	30 June 2025	30 June 2024
Income/Receipts		
Revenue from Government grants		
	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Donations and bequests		
<i>Donations</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 25.00
<i>Bequests</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Other revenue/receipts		
<i>Membership & Insurance Levy</i>	\$ 1,661.00	\$ 1,614.36
<i>Sale of merchandise</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 100.00
<i>Other – Closure of Knox Branch</i>	N/A	\$ 3,826.23
<i>Other – Unexpended Knox Branch grant</i>	N/A	\$ 1,545.00
Other income		
<i>Interest on term deposits</i>	\$ 5,596.13	\$ 4,143.32
<i>Other</i>	\$ 50.00	\$ 0.00
Total Income	<u>\$ 7,307.13</u>	<u>\$ 11,153.91</u>
Expenses/Payments		
Other Expenses		
<i>Insurance</i>	\$ 1,901.59	\$ 1,802.72
<i>Hall hire & catering</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
<i>Postage and Printing</i>	\$ 164.00	\$ 213.38
<i>Travel expenses</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
<i>Other (Administration costs)</i>	\$ 1,021.69	\$ 4,625.00
<i>Other (Website)</i>	\$ 1,137.75	
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 4,225.03</u>	<u>\$ 6,887.39</u>
Net surplus / (deficit)	<u>\$ 3082.10</u>	<u>\$ 4,226.52</u>

HBVCI is reporting a net surplus of \$3082.10, compared to a net surplus of \$4226.52 for the previous year.

The term deposit of \$95,000.00 has been reinvested for a further 11 months, with a maturity date of 19 March 2026. A second term deposit of \$15,000.00 was reinvested for a further 11 months and 30 days, with a maturity date of 26 November 2025. The monthly interest from both term deposits is credited to the General Account.

Balance Sheet

	June 2025	June 2024
Current Assets		
<i>Raffle Account & Cash Reserve Account</i>	\$ 6.96	\$ 0.00
<i>General Account</i>	\$ 19,048.92	\$ 15,966.82
<i>Term Deposits</i>	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 110,000.00
<i>Merchandise</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Total Current Assets	<u>\$ 129,055.88</u>	<u>\$ 125,966.82</u>
Fixed Assets		
<i>Equipment</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Total Assets	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 125,966.82</u>
Current Liabilities		
<i>Creditors and accruals</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
<i>Borrowings</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
<i>Provision</i>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Total Liabilities	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Net Assets	<u>\$ 129,055.88</u>	<u>\$ 125,966.82</u>

Total cash reserves are \$129,055.88.

HBVCI continues not to incur any debts or liabilities. The net asset position of \$129,055.88 continues to be strong.

Statement of Solvency

That, based on our current level of cash holdings and current knowledge of future costs, and in line with our history of spending, we have adequate funds to pay our obligations and be trading solvent.

Karen Saccuzzo - Treasurer



Vivien Williamson – Secretary



