



Heartbeat Victoria

Heartbeat Happenings Autumn 2026

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

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BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President: Christine Rees

Vice President: Barry Nixon

Secretary: Vivien Williamson

Treasurer: David Stella

Board Members: John Allen; Elaine Gregory;
Andrew Murphy; Rebecca Ritchie

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.

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 provided emotional support, share information, advocate for better health outcomes and raise funds for cardiac equipment and improved cardiac care.

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President's Message – Christine Rees



Welcome to Autumn and the season of change. Let's, as cardiac consumers, be ready for change with our immunity, exercise and general health. Getting an appointment with our medical team or GP at this time means we can be in top shape for the winter and all

that comes with it. Even just a check and chat with your GP can help keep us on track with maintaining our good health.

I was privileged to share a walk with a Ballarat indoor walking group before Christmas - an amazing group of some 40 people doing a wonderfully healthy walk and chat. The support and encouragement were amazing, with seats (which I needed to use) available, lots of chat and then morning tea after. This all-inclusive, all-abilities group and I felt very proud to be Heartbeat members and very lucky to be sharing this walk.

Recently I visited Sunraysia and took part in a Hands On Heart event and dinner. This is a volunteer group which teaches CPR to others and to Grades 5 and 6 children free - a wonderful group funded and supported by the Lions Club.

I was also invited to speak at the ACRA Victoria conference where I was able to have positive conversations with a number of health service and rehabilitation providers. I am looking at meetings with some of these teams in the coming months.

It has been a tough time for some Board members, and I know we all wish them well. To those in branches who are working at improving your health, hang in there! We are with you and please let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Take care, all of you who are going away, and, for those at home, increasing indoor walks can help keep up the good exercise habits.



New Brochure

Over the past several weeks, the Board has been working on creating a new brochure to describe what Heartbeat does, and to provide contact information for those who want to make contact.

There are two versions of the brochure – a printable tri-fold and an emailable version (see the copy at the end of this newsletter).

Both have been sent to affiliates and branches for their use. There is a blank space on the printable version for affiliates and branches to add their own contact details.

The new brochures are almost ready for printing. The content has been approved by the Board. Thanks to Board members Andrew and John for bringing this together and many thanks to Pei En at The Baker Institute for the graphics work which gives our brochure a coordinated and professional look.

Affiliates and branches may wish to print their own brochures locally, working with their local suppliers, but, if not, they can contact Board member John Allen – john@heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Treasurer support

The Board Treasurer, David Stella, has started to provide direct support for the financial management of the Sunraysia and South Gippsland Heartbeat branches. David can be contacted via email (david@heartbeatvictoria.org.au) in relation to financial matters.

Peer support in Bendigo

As previously reported, at the November Annual General Meeting of Heartbeat Bendigo, there were no nominations for Committee positions and the group will not be continuing on a formal basis. However some members continue to catch up for informal social gatherings.

At the March meeting of the Board of Heartbeat Victoria, the Board resolved as follows:

“The Board of HBVCI recognises the near-40-year history of Heartbeat Bendigo and the contribution they have made to the Bendigo community. We understand, but regret, the recent decision of the Committee not to stand for re-election, leading to the dissolution of the group.

We also recognize the ongoing need for peer support in the Bendigo cardiac patient community.

In order to help meet this need, we propose setting up a new branch in Bendigo, and where possible, leverage the expertise and experience of the previous committee to do this effectively”.

Advertising for new Board members

The Board is currently advertising for new Board members with skills and experience in governance, marketing, media, communications and digital engagement.

A copy of the advertisement for a Board position is included at the end of this newsletter.

What's Happening

What's been happening at some of our branches and affiliates lately?

Sunraysia



In the crispness of the early Saturday morning chill yesterday (28 March 2026), I was joined by five Sunraysia Heartbeat members and the husband of one, totalling seven of us, to eagerly bid farewell and safe riding to the Murray to Moyné cycle teams who will ride 520kms over two days.

They departed from the IGA carpark at Irymple, but the riders were faced with a gruelling southerly wind which was going to make the beginning of their ride rather challenging. From

Irymple, they were travelling south to Lascelles, then on through Hopetoun, Warracknabeal and having a quick stopover at Hamilton, where the riders from Echuca were to meet them. This morning, all teams ride together, ending their fund-raising ride in Port Fairy.

Heartbeat Sunraysia was asked to join the Australian Almond Board Team for a photo, and it was announced that once again, our organisation would be a recipient of their fund-raising effort this weekend. Afterwards, we enjoyed a chat over a warm cuppa at the Bakery.

(Julie Burnell – Treasurer)



South Gippsland

South Gippsland branch is very excited to be hosting Professor Rebecca Ritchie to a meeting and already has 30+ acceptances - go South Gippsland! Best wishes and thanks to Janne Grenon who has been challenged by ongoing health issues but has managed this event, inviting other community groups to attend.

There are also some keen walkers who are working on a finding a venue for indoor walking. Watch this space for more news.

Goulburn Valley Branch and Tatura Group

Dinner meetings monthly

The first Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Branch Dinner meeting for 2026 was held on Monday February 3rd at 6.00pm at the Peppermill Inn conference room.

The guest presenter was newly appointed, Amy De Paola, Director of Goulburn Valley Health (GVH) Foundation and Fundraising. It was pleasing to have Amy join us for dinner and meet with Heartbeat members. Amy provided information on her skills base and other interests in the community and explained her role within the GVH Foundation, the operation of other support services that function within GVH and how we can best develop effective connections and work together to grow Heartbeat, expanding on what it offers in both health, wellbeing and fundraising for cardiac /emergency equipment.

The March dinner meeting had twenty-five attend, and the education was a webinar from Heart Research Australia “How your heart health impacts your brain and thinking abilities”.

The “Heartbeat GV Calendar of Events for 2026” has been circulated to members and is available on the Heartbeat Victoria website.

It has been pleasing to see 7-10 members from Tatura travel together to attend meetings in Shepparton, as well as those organised in Tatura.

Coffee mornings monthly



This year we are meeting at Degani Café Riverside Plaza Shepparton monthly on the third Thursday. These social get togethers have been well attended with ten – twelve enjoying the opportunity to have a chat together.

Lunches bimonthly

Our first luncheon, held in March at the RSL Club Shepparton, was enjoyed by the thirteen members who attended.

Tatura Heartbeat Walking Group



There are now twenty registered Tatura walkers meeting every Monday morning at Tatura Community House at 9.00am, December - April 20th, then back to a 10.00am start.

There are two groups, a 1.5km and 3-4km walk around streets in Tatura, as well as the Cussen Park and Lake Bartlett wetlands areas. Walkers are enjoying getting out in the fresh air and walking with the company of others and all the benefits that it offers.

After the walks, we meet in the Community House for some social time together while enjoying morning tea. Sampling and sharing of new recipes for healthy snacks is popular during this time.

Congratulations to Liz Mulcahy who has completed 26 walks.

Heartbeat Tatura Support Group

This enthusiastic group meets at Tatura Community House on the third Monday monthly, discussing and sharing ideas and heart health and wellbeing education by video and information sheets. Members have requested to have outdoor gatherings with a walk and lunch together every second month, weather permitting.



On March 16th the Heartbeat Group attended a Walk and Picnic Lunch at Lake Victoria Shepparton. Eleven members took the opportunity to exercise by enjoying a pleasant walk in a beautiful environment around the lake on a lovely autumn day. Lunch was then shared, together with time to chat and socialise. Four members spent time at the Shepparton Arts Museum before heading home.

Ballarat

Heartbeat Victoria Ballarat Branch memberships cost just \$20.00 per year and run January to December. Treasurer Anne Gow has been busy issuing receipts to new and returning members. Whilst it is a little early to know, what the annual number of members will be, it is very encouraging to see 75% of previous members renew their memberships by March 30th. A warm welcome to all returning and new members. Heartbeat Ballarat offers peer support, exercise opportunities, and social connection. We are proud to be noticing, inviting, welcoming, and including of all.



COME WALK WITH US! at DTC DELACOMBE TOWN CENTRE 11am Thursday February 19th

Weekly from Feb 19th. Meet outside K-Mart entry.

Indoor Walking Groups & Cuppa – This 45-minute indoor walking opportunity is a supervised walk. Trip hazard free, flat floor. Set own pace and distance. Ideal for all abilities, including seniors, cardiac rehabilitation graduates, surgery recovery, and rehabilitation patients, and better health seekers. Walking aids welcome. Optional cuppa at own cost available after each walk.

Come walk with US! OK to just arrive and walk.

Questions? Message 0447377159

Facebook/ Heartbeat Ballarat

Currently Heartbeat Ballarat offers five Heart Foundation registered weekly walks at five different locations. Commencing on February 19th, we added a fifth weekly walk for our Ballarat members with diverse abilities.

Delacombe Town Centre (DTC) is a very large shopping complex, approximately six kilometres from the city, in a newly developed area in southwest Ballarat. The DTC Indoor Diverse Abilities 11am Thursday walks are similar to the Tuesday 10am walks held at the Ballarat Badminton Centre.

These 45-minute indoor walking opportunities are supervised walks, on trip hazard free flat floors. Walkers set their own pace and distance. They are ideal for all abilities, including seniors, cardiac rehabilitation graduates, surgery recovery, and rehabilitation patients, and better health seekers. Walking aids are welcomed. Optional cuppas at a walkers own cost are available after each walk.



Heartbeat Victoria President, Christine Rees, visited Ballarat Branch and walked indoors at Ballarat Badminton Stadium before Christmas. Christine said: “Peer support is not easy to describe but to see Ballarat Branch in action was amazing. The Tuesday group was a happy, communicative and energetic bunch of people doing great things for their hearts and mental health. That type of peer support cannot be taught but is a tribute to people who are generous of spirit.”

Locals come to Heartbeat Ballarat for the exercise, but they stay for the social connection. This is the reason Social Activities Leader Lyn Webb arranges regular social activities for our members.



Friday January 30th was a very busy day for Ballarat members, with volunteers leading and conducting four separate activities on the one day - a regular Friday 10am walk in Ballarat Botanic Gardens, a coffee catch up in the Lakeview Hotel, a 7am to 4pm Bunnings fundraising BBQ sausage sizzle, and a stall at the Ballarat Aged Expo in Ballarat North Sporting Club from 10am to 1pm! A huge thanks to all volunteers. A sizeable amount was raised at Bunnings and Ballarat Mayor Councillor Tracey Hargreaves stopped by Heartbeat's information booth and was photographed for local media with Heartbeat volunteers Helen and Leigh.

During recent weeks, in addition to regular walks, members have attended two additional walk and outdoor picnic events, a pub dinner to celebrate members' birthdays, a cinema morning session with lunch, and an after dark Cemetery Ghost Tour to celebrate Barry's birthday. February events included an afternoon tea in Sebastopol, an open garden tour, and Ballarat Branch February AGM meeting, with guest speaker Megan Farley, a local occupational therapist.



Meagan (Meg) Farley

Meg graduated from James Cook University, Townsville, with a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy in 2017. She has a diverse background and a passion for travel and adventure. Meg completed clinical placements in Far North Queensland and Geraldton, Western Australia, and began her Occupational Therapy career in regional Victoria, closer to her family.

WED FEB 18th at Table 48
Meal 6pm - Speaker 7.15pm - AGM

On March 24th, Heartbeat Ballarat held its first Tuesday 10am - Walk, Cuppa & Talk event in the Ballarat Badminton Centre on Dowling Street, with guest speaker Michelle Graeber and morning tea provided by Helen Sarra. The event was open to all and fifty (50) attended. 48 walkers participated in the indoor walk prior to the talk. Michelle Graeber is the CEO of The Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria (ARCVic), a State-wide, specialist mental health organisation, providing support, recovery and educational services to people and families living with anxiety disorders. Michelle's group aims to support and equip people with knowledge and skills that will build resilience and recovery and reduce the impact of anxiety disorders. Heartbeat Member, Jilly Benney said, “It was very interesting. Thank you, Michelle, for coming all that way and you gave us all many valuable pointers!” Sincere thanks to Michelle and The Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria (ARCVic) for travelling from Melbourne to share with and educate Heartbeat Ballarat members. Special thanks to Deputy President Hellen Sarra for suggesting Michelle and planning, and hosting this special event. It was a very engaging and educational event for members - and Helen's muffins were delicious!

Fawkner Park Walking Group

The next walk of the Fawkner Park Walking Group has been set for 10am on Thursday, April 23rd. To register for the walk, visit the Heart Foundation Walking page for the [Fawkner Park Walking Group](#).

Please send us your latest news for inclusion in the Winter 2026 edition of Heartbeat Happenings which will be published in February 2026 (send to vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au by Friday May 10, 2026.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BOARD POSITIONS

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. is a long-standing charitable organisation (established 1984) providing peer support to people who have experienced a cardiac event or are living with heart disease across Victoria. We also raise funds for vital cardiac and emergency equipment for health services.

We work closely with Heart Foundation Walking, hospitals, the local community including cardiac and rehabilitation programs to improve the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of Victorians living with heart disease.

We Are Seeking Volunteer Board Members

Heartbeat Victoria is governed by a volunteer Board responsible for the strategic direction, governance and sustainability of the organisation. As we continue to strengthen our impact and visibility across Victoria, we are seeking experienced and strategically minded individuals to join the Board.

Skills

We are particularly interested in candidates with experience in:

- **Legal** (governance, compliance, regulatory or charity law experience highly regarded)
- **Marketing & Brand Strategy**
- **Media, Communications & Digital Engagement**

Additional experience in health, community services, fundraising, finance or risk will also be valued.

The Role

Board members contribute to:

- Setting strategic direction and priorities
- Ensuring strong governance and compliance
- Strengthening organisational sustainability
- Enhancing community engagement and public profile

Bi-monthly meetings (Melbourne-based with hybrid participation available).
This is a voluntary role.

About You

You will bring:

- An understanding of the responsibilities of board membership
- Strategic thinking and sound judgement
- A collaborative, community-focused approach
- A genuine commitment to improving outcomes for people living with heart disease
- Lived experience of cardiac disease personally or as a carer (highly valued, not essential)

If you are looking to contribute your professional expertise at a governance level and help elevate the impact and visibility of a respected community organisation, we would welcome your interest.

To express interest please contact Christine Rees (president) christine@heartbeatvictoria.org.au



**Heartbeat
Victoria**

where

SUPPORT

matters

**WE ARE
OHM**

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers that creates and promotes cardiac peer support groups across Victoria for individuals and families living with heart disease.

We have a proud 40-year history of offering Peer Support, Exercise and Social Connection, with members throughout Victoria.

Support groups are an important first step for people who are recovering from a cardiac event or adjusting to living with heart disease.

- Cardiac peer support groups complement other care services.
- They provide opportunities to learn about cardiac health and speak to others in a similar situation.
- They also provide friendship and support for ongoing heart health and wellbeing for cardiac patients and / or their carers.

**CARDIAC PEER
SUPPORT**



HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Join us

Membership of Heartbeat Victoria is open to individuals who are interested in receiving the positive benefits of belonging to a cardiac peer support group or have an interest in issues affecting people with heart disease.

Membership is offered to all interested in heart health. You do not have to be living with cardiac illness to become a member of Heartbeat Victoria.

For more information on becoming a member, and to apply, please visit our [website](#).

Partner with us

We welcome partnering with interested organisations that are also working to improve cardiac health, and several of our current partners are featured on our website.

Please contact us to discuss how we can work together.

Donations

Heartbeat Victoria relies on the generous support of individuals and corporations to help us continue work to support and advocate for heart health in Victoria. We are registered charity and endorsed as a deductible gift recipient.

To donate to Heartbeat Victoria please visit our [website](#) for details.



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