



Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

ABN 76 073 229 523

Address: P.O. Box 144, Parkville, Vic, 3052

Facebook: www.facebook.com/HeartbeatVictoria

Website: www.heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Email: hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Tel: 0474 866 474

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.

© Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. 2025

President's Message



I must start by apologising to our newest Life Member, Barry Nixon. I failed to celebrate his achievements with the Heartbeat Victoria community at our AGM. Barry has worked tirelessly volunteering at the cardiac rehabilitation sessions, caring for Ballarat members, and promoting and organising social events and well attended walking groups. Barry was the first to co-badge walking groups with the Heart Foundation.

I would also like to acknowledge Barry's work with the Board. Barry stepped up when the Board was needing support, taking on official roles and working hard to promote and stabilize the Board and the work of Heartbeat Victoria. Barry has been a wonderful support to me and others on the Board, and remains an outspoken advocate of heart health, cardiac rehabilitation, and living well with a cardiac challenge. Barry has also been involved in several research efforts, has connected researchers with the Heartbeat Victoria community and has done an educational video for cardiologists, helping them to understand consumer needs. Recently, there has been growth of some groups, and two new groups have started. There have also been increased requests for information, and we continue to have requests for research interactions and speakers. Visits to our website have increased and we've also had more media coverage. Congratulations to Heartbeat Sunraysia on celebrating 40 years of service and fundraising in their community. The celebration was wonderful and saw radio and newspaper coverage reaching more local people.

Enjoy the better weather that spring promises. Remember to move and let's all encourage more walking in spring.



Annual General Meeting

The 2024-2025 Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 9 September, via Zoom. Delegates from most of the Heartbeat affiliates and branches across Victoria attended, as well as other Heartbeat members, including a member of the new Tatura group and over thirty members from Heartbeat Ballarat, who joined the meeting from the Lake View Hotel, Ballarat.

The agenda included consideration of the Annual Report, including annual financial statements, and the election of Board members and Dr Kegan Moneghetti gave a very informative presentation on the topic *"Spotting Heart Disease Early – and How You Can Help Shape the Future of Heart Care"*.

Elections were also held for vacant positions on the Board and David Stella was elected to the position of Treasurer for a two year term (see next page).

Three Board members are not continuing and we are very grateful for their commitment and service.

- Kevin Reid (Heartbeat Goulburn Valley) joined the Board in 2022. Kevin remains an active member of Heartbeat Goulburn Valley.
- Karen Saccuzzo (Heartbeat Goulburn Valley) generously took on the role of Treasurer in 2022. Karen has a busy full time job as Volunteer Coordinator at Goulburn Valley Health.
- Vanaja Thomas has resigned from the Board to focus on her personal and professional commitments.



New Board Member – David Stella



The Board of Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc is pleased to introduce our new Treasurer, David Stella.

David is a Chartered Accountant with over 15 years' experience across business planning, financial control, strategic finance and tax in both ASX listed and SME organisations. He is currently the Business Planning and Analysis Manager at Accelagen Pty Ltd, a contract research organisation (CRO) based in Melbourne.

David has joined Heartbeat Victoria because he strongly supports the organisation's mission and is committed to helping sustain its financial health. He loves working with numbers and enjoys coaching and mentoring others to build their financial confidence. Outside of work, David lives in Collingwood with his partner and their cavoodle, Panda. Energetic, and committed to health and fitness, he also loves travelling and exploring Melbourne's many restaurants with friends.

Newly Formed Fawkner Park Walking Group



A new walking group has been launched by Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. and the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, in collaboration with Heart Foundation Walking.

The Group held its first walk on August 19th on a beautiful, sunny winter morning in Melbourne. The walk was the first step towards creating a new cardiac peer support group in Melbourne, to help improve heart health in the community.

Just over 30 walkers took part, including organizers from Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc., the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and Heart Foundation Walking.

They were joined by several Board members from Heartbeat Victoria, as well as five walkers from Heartbeat Ballarat, who made the trip to Melbourne by train to participate.

The Director of the Baker Institute attended the kick-off and was joined by a large number of Baker staff who completed the 30-minute walk around Fawkner Park.

After the walk, the group shared a cuppa and a snack at the Baker Institute, while listening to an excellent presentation on healthy eating.

The next walking date will be set soon. The walk is open to anyone who is interested and will include some researchers from the Baker, as well as Board members of Heartbeat Victoria. To register for the walk, please visit the Heart Foundation Walking page for the [Fawkner Park Walking Group](#).



Heart Health



Fostering active conversations between the cardiac community and research

(Professor Rebecca Ritchie – Heartbeat Victoria Board Member)

As a researcher whose work focusses on improved understanding heart failure, and which treatment approaches might better suit different people's needs, I am a strong believer in engaging with the larger community to talk about our research.

For me, it's a valuable reminder of why we do what we do.

Truly valuable insights have come out of my conversations with people with lived experience of heart failure, whether their own, or caring for a close family member. Knowing what's important to people in the cardiac community can help guide us in how we design our research studies. One recent example that comes to mind from chats with community members over the last 12 months is the one-on-one chat over a coffee about how important it is for someone with heart failure to be able to go about their everyday life activities without getting too exhausted. For this person, that was more important for them than living as long as possible. Quality over quantity (just like chocolate!). If you've ever had a cardiologist ask you to walk on a treadmill, this is why. They're not seeing if you can run a marathon, they're trying to work out your quality of life. For my research studies, we do something similar in the lab, investigating whether the new treatments we're designing can improve how much effort the individual is able to make, before and after the treatment. Of course, we still look at a range of measures of heart function, to ask whether the strength of the heart's ability to pump with each heart beat (and to recover in between heart beats) is better with our new treatment in a heart failure setting. We also measure activity levels of different proteins in the heart - this helps us understand how and why a new drug works.



One of my big hopes is that people in the cardiac community are just as keen to have these conversations



with people doing heart research. Active participation with both sides of the conversation is usually beneficial, whether someone wants answers to the easier questions, such as why their GP or cardiologist wants them to have certain tests or take different medications, to the really tricky questions like Why Me. The cardiac research field has made great advances in the last 30 years, improving both quality and length of life, but there's still so much work that needs to be done, and a lot of questions that need to be answered.

When I'm not at the lab, I enjoy regularly engaging with people from all sides of the cardiac community – those with lived experience, their carers, and their medical team (including their GPs, cardiologists, nursing, cardiac rehab and other healthcare professionals). It's hard to beat such an open exchange of knowledge. I also get so much inspiration from these opportunities – the resilience shown by those with lived experience is nothing short of inspirational.

From a personal perspective, I have lived experience of the disproportionate impact of cardiovascular disease management in rural and remote communities. I grew up in a rural community more than 650km from the nearest capital city, following several generations of my immediate family. Indeed, my paternal grandfather died prematurely there, suffering a fatal heart attack at 62. My family history also includes stroke on both sides.

This is why I was so honoured to be asked to join the Board of Management of Heartbeat Victoria. Indeed, my first interaction with Heartbeat was with Heartbeat South Australia volunteers when I was a 22 year-old PhD student at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in South Australia (more than 30 years ago!) – their empathy with, and care for, patients and their families in the Coronary Care Unit left such a lasting impression.

I am really excited to be able to do my bit to help foster active conversations between the cardiac community and those of us doing heart research at universities and medical research institutes. My regular community engagement activities thus far have encompassed public events, community days and one-on-one interactions (providing multiple opportunities to share personal lived experiences and research goals and impact in both directions). I'm open to new ways of having these conversations too. To date, these exchanges have included lived experiences in cardiovascular disease (including heart failure) across metropolitan, regional and First Nations perspectives. However, I have not previously had the opportunity to play an active part of a vital, community-based patient advocacy group. I am really excited by the opportunity to join Heartbeat Victoria - to engage more directly and to give back to the community that has provided me with such an interesting career.

Thank you for having me on the Heartbeat Victoria team– I'm really looking forward to lots of chats with everyone!

World Heart Day - 29 September 2025



Each year, cardiovascular disease (CVD) claims over 20.5 million lives. Most of these premature deaths are preventable through early action and access to health care, so every year on World Heart Day, we unite across the globe to raise awareness, inspire action, and celebrate heart health.

This year, [the theme of World Heart Day](#) is 'Don't Miss A Beat'. Join the [global petition](#) to prioritise heart health today, get involved, and make every heartbeat count!

This World Heart Day (29 September), SOLVE-CHD is inviting cardiac rehabilitation (CR) programs all over Australia to show off their work and raise awareness for heart health with the power of creativity!

Craft a visual display – whether physically in your clinic or digitally – and send them a picture of it to enter SOLVE-CHD's Cardiac Rehabilitation Creative Display Competition. Displays will be showcased to the wider community and the one with the most votes will win a prize valued up to \$400 AUD.

Entries will open in September, so make sure you Don't Miss A Beat and get your display ready for World Heart Day now. Together we can promote the importance of cardiac rehabilitation, foster connections with our community, and help shape a healthier future!

Check out the full details of [this program here](#), and get involved in World Heart Day!



Heart to Heart

featuring one member's heart health or peer support experience

Barbara's Heartbeat Journey

(Barbara Dellar – Heartbeat Bendigo)



I first heard about Heartbeat in March 1998, when I was visited by a Heartbeat South Australia member following my own heart attack and double by-pass surgery, when I was living in Adelaide. I was 59 years old and, with rehab, weight loss and exercises, I enjoyed a full recovery.

One year later, in February 1999, my husband Ken and I moved to Bendigo. We built a new house, connected with family and friends and made new friends. I joined a quilting group; Ken joined a golf club and a Men's Shed (he was a keen woodworker). I had no other knowledge of Heartbeat.

However, I am a keen theatre goer and travelled independently to Melbourne several times for musicals, until I learned that some friends and neighbours were enjoying these outings arranged by the Heartbeat Bendigo Branch Social Committee. That was right up my street, and prompted my joining in 2009.

I attended meetings and all the outings arranged by the Social Committee and, at my very first meeting, I mentioned to a member that I was thinking about doing some volunteering. I was overheard by the then Branch Secretary, Dawn Bateman, and before my feet could hit the ground, Dawn had me rostered on to volunteer at Cardiac Rehab. I loved it!!! and continued weekly or fortnightly, including giving talks about Heartbeat to rehab patients and other organisations, until COVID put a stop to it and I retired from volunteering.

As well as social events and General Meetings, I participated in many activities, including Melbourne Council (Heartbeat Victoria) meetings, delegates meetings, and in 2015 and 2016 decided to take on the role of Branch President, under the amazing guidance of long-term Branch Secretary, Dawn Bateman. In that role, I chaired Committee Meetings and General Meetings; developed Operating Guidelines for the various activities of the Branch; Position Descriptions for the Committee roles; adapted the Rules of Association to reflect the Bendigo Branch, which were subsequently accepted by Consumer Affairs Victoria; and liaised with the CEOs of both Bendigo hospitals in relation to funding of equipment.

During my membership, I produced the Tickertalk newsletter for many years and rejoined the General Committee as Vice President and a member of the Social Committee, until my retirement from those roles at the 2024 AGM.

However I continue to represent the Branch, along with Nola and Frank Ward, at many equipment donation handovers, and continue to speak to groups about Heartbeat at times. I still participate in many Branch activities including fund raisers, lunches and general meetings.

I thank all members of the Heartbeat Bendigo Branch, especially the Committees, for their friendship and support over the years. It has been a very rewarding and fulfilling experience for me.

With affection,

Barbara Dellar



Lisa Chesters MP presenting a Federal Government grant to Heartbeat Bendigo's Barbara Dellar and Nola Ward

What's Happening

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

Sunraysia



On Friday September 5th, Heartbeat Sunraysia celebrated 40 years, which began on the September 8th, 1985.

Invitations, organised by our Secretary Elaine, were sent out a few weeks before. Phil Sedgman spoke with radio station 1467 a couple of weeks prior to the event, then, on the day, both Christine Rees and Gail Newton did live interviews with ABC radio. We also had coverage in the Sunraysia daily, prior to and after the celebration, which was fantastic. Thanks to Katrina Umback for her support.



On the morning of the celebration we had all hands on deck to set up the activity room at the "Princes Court Village". A lovely display table included a mixture of information - previous minutes, newspaper articles and photos of the past 40 years that was put together by member Patsy. Job well done. Thank you also to the Baker Institute for providing educational materials and a selection of athletic clothing. Chemist Warehouse also provided us with a beautiful door prize, which was very generous.

Our celebration was attended by 50 plus people who enjoyed an afternoon of heart health information, followed by a lovely afternoon tea. Guest speakers included:

- Gail Newton (Treasurer Heartbeat Sunraysia)
History of Heartbeat, with Heartbeat Sunraysia being the first country branch in Victoria.
- Elaine Gregory –(Secretary Heartbeat Sunraysia)
A carer's role and the importance for the need of support.
- Jacob McEwan (Ambulance Victoria)
The difference between a heart attack and cardiac arrest.
- Emma Bath (Ramsay Health)
The establishment of up a new cardiac unit at the Mildura Base Hospital.
- Professor Rebecca Ritchie (Heartbeat Victoria Board member and researcher)
The challenges in research in cardiac health
- Christine Rees (President, Heartbeat Victoria)
What it is s like to have heart disease and its challenges and the importance of heart health checks.

Thank you to all our members for their hard work in making our celebration a success. We should all be very proud of ourselves.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who attended. We really appreciate your support.



Big love for heart health heroes

Karri Farrell

AMONGST the many important messages conveyed at the 40th anniversary of the formation of Heartbeat Sunraysia at Princes Court in Mildura on Friday, three things came across loud and clear.

The first is that early detection of heart disease can save thousands of lives annually, the second is the importance of accessible defibrillators, and the third is that more support is needed for carers and those who have loved ones who die from it.

About 120 people die from cardiovascular problems each day, with a large number from sudden cardiac arrests caused by undetected health problems that could easily have been picked up by a routine heart check.

Rebecca Ritchie, a board member of Heartbeat Victoria and cardiac pharmacologist at Monash University attended Friday's event and said it's vital for people over the age of 45 to request their free heart checks from their GP. "When you're at the GP, you ask for the heart check and don't be put off if the GP says to you you're not at risk, just have the confidence to say I want a heart health check," she said.

"They will refer you to a cardiologist if they think that's what you need; they may also refer you on for an echocardiography, depending on how your heart's functioning, or a CT angiography or anything like that."

Heartbeat Sunraysia board member and spokesperson Elaine Gregory recently lost her husband to heart problems and said the foundation has helped support her emotionally through a tough few months.



Former president of Heartbeat Sunraysia Lyn Black and life member Bill Burns helped cut the cake at the organisation's 40th birthday celebrations last week. Pictures: Ben Gress

"It started with Mack Hudson 40 years ago when he had a heart issue over in Adelaide, and he realised there was no supports, so he was the one that actually got it all started," she said.

"We offer support for people with heart disease, because if you look around, there's no support, and everyone has been touched by heart issues."

Mrs Gregory also said increased awareness of heart checks may help reduce the mortality rate, and that doctors need to get on board when a patient has concerns.

"The doctors aren't doing these free heart health checks, that's where we're being let down, as we have cancer awareness, MND, but where's the heart, and guess what's the biggest killer?" she said.

Bendigo

Bendigo's social events during the winter months included a winter lunch at the Lakeview Hotel and a Christmas in July event which was also very successful. It was great to be able to join with other community groups to share that occasion. Some of those attending had come from Kyneton to join in.



By the conclusion of the financial year the branch has been able to expend the final amount of the \$4,000 Federal Government Volunteer Grant on an overhead projector and an office chair for our hardworking Treasurer. This grant has enabled us to purchase much

needed items for the Branch and so to better support our volunteer-based organisation.

Heartbeat Bendigo's AGM, scheduled for September, unfortunately had to be postponed due to ill-health and will now take place in November. At the AGM, the annual report and financial statements will be received and elections held for the Committee.

Sadly, in the past weeks, two of our older and long term members have passed away. John Hollis (90) had been a member since 2005 and Ian Cross (84) had been a member since 2014 and a member of the current Committee.



Goulburn Valley

The Goulburn Valley Branch continued through the winter months with a restricted events program due to the cold weather and members on holiday in warmer areas. No get-togethers were held in July, with a luncheon and coffee morning held in August.

September 1st saw the commencement of our night dinner meetings at the Peppermill Inn Hotel Shepparton. Seven of the new Heartbeat Tatura Group members also attended this meeting and were welcomed by all present.



We had a guest speaker on this night, Lauren Theodore, Dietitian from Goulburn Valley Health. Lauren presented valuable information for members with a focus on Healthy eating for adults and particularly heart health, including any new research backing changes to previous recommendations, along with portion guidelines. Some ideas for eating out and making menu choices and reading labels to obtain correct information re salt, fats, sugar etc. were also covered and handouts on these topics were available.

Monday October 6th, 2025, is the date of the AGM for Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Branch 2024-25. The 2025-26 year will lead us to December 19th, which will be the Branch's 40th birthday of its continuous operation in the Goulburn Valley community.

The Branch has a fundraising event planned for Sunday October 26th .

Heartbeat Tatura Walking Group

Since the beginning of this group on June 14th, the number of walkers has grown to eleven, with three Group leaders. All walkers are enthusiastic and very pleased that they have improved the distance they are walking and feeling the benefits. Walkers meet on Monday each month at 10.00am at the Tatura Community House. One group walks 1.5km and includes people with walking aids and the others walk 3km +. We all catch up together following the walk in the "Coffee Room" at the Community House to socialise together and share morning tea provided by leaders. We look forward to growing this group as the weather improves and the message spreads of the health and wellbeing benefits.

Heartbeat Tatura Peer Support Group

This group is an extension of the Goulburn Valley Branch and meets monthly on the third Monday of the month. The group participates in a walk at 12 and bring lunch to have together at Community House before the meeting at 1-30pm-3.00pm. The education and information sessions have included screening a video about the "Heart and Circulatory System, how they work", how to ask questions of your specialist and other health professionals, and shared personal journey of heart surgery by a member. Candice, Goulburn Valley Health Coach, has also attended and spoken of the services she now continues to provide at the Community House. The get-together concludes with afternoon tea and further time to chat and share.

The next Tatura meeting is a social outing to Rushworth to do some short walks and view the wildflowers in the surrounding bush areas and enjoy a picnic lunch together.



Ballarat

Ballarat branch has three mottos that we use to promote our branch and activities.

1. “Peer Support, Exercise, and Social Connection”. These words highlight what the Ballarat branch offers via membership.
2. “Come Walk With US!” It’s a warm and welcoming invitation and everyone is welcome.
3. “Walk, Talk, Coffee, Repeat”.

That’s exactly what we do. Four times a week, thirty to thirty-five members walk, talk, share an optional cuppa, and repeat. Eighty active walkers currently participate in weekly walking groups.

Social connection activities are regularly held, the most recent being a Meet and Greet event that joined the Heartbeat Victoria AGM via Zoom on September 9th. Thirty-five members attended, with strong interest in guest speaker Associate Professor Kegan Moneghetti. It was a great gathering and a unique experience to see how Heartbeat Victoria Council Incorporated, and its Board, functions.



Other recent events have included a Women’s Health Week Walk held indoors with cooperation from Jean Hailes, the Heart Foundation, and Badminton Ballarat.

A fun games afternoon was held in August at Ingenia Lifestyle Parkside Retirement Village in Lucas. Members also travelled to Melbourne to walk with the new Heartbeat



and Baker Institute Fawkner Park Walking Group, Ageing Well movie mornings monthly (Downton Abbey in September) and a bus outing to the musical, Annie.



The Ballarat Committee is meeting monthly due to its current workload and the event planning required. Excitement is building for a new, fifth weekly walk planned for Thursday lunchtimes. President Mark is finalising the negotiation and details, and the Committee is undertaking risk assessments.

Congratulations to the Heartbeat Victoria Sunraysia Branch for forty fabulous years of peer support and care for the Sunraysia region’s heart patients and families. Heartbeat Ballarat President, Mark, and his Committee, along with all Ballarat members, salute you. Congratulations and thank you for caring! Wow! Forty years! Amazing!