



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: Mark Vorstenbosch

Secretary: Amy Lock

Treasurer: David Stella

Board Members: John Allen; Elaine Gregory;
Jen Irvine; Deb Mackellin; Andrew Murphy;
Barry Nixon; 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 spring and the warmer weather. Spring also sees a new Board, with elections held at the September AGM. I hope that some of you will be joining the Board to ensure Heartbeat Victoria has prosperous growth into 2027.

Leaving the Board is Vivien, our current Secretary. Vivien has served as Secretary of both the Board and Heartbeat Bendigo. Our Strategic Plan, New Rules of Association and Heartbeat Happenings are just a small part of Vivien's work for Heartbeat, and we thank her for her solid contribution to the governance and meeting procedures and wish her well.

Winter as always has been a bit slow for visits, and some Branches are still facing challenges. I have been in contact with all Branches and we are working together to move forward and strengthen the cardiac community.

Ballarat and Sunraysia have seen growth in their numbers and strength in their interactions with the community. In Bendigo, Board member John Allen has set up a first walk, co-sponsored by the Heart Foundation Walking and Heartbeat Victoria, with several people ready to attend. Thanks too to Alan Bell and Leigh Miller from Heartbeat Ballarat for their support and coaching with this initiative to continue to support the cardiac community in Bendigo.

Looking forward, we have many research startups, and I hope some of you will participate. There is now a requirement to have consumers (that's us) on most research projects (see our website). This work is very satisfying, knowing we are contributing to the improved care and management for all cardiac challenged people. Please let us know if you would like to be involved in any of these worthwhile projects.



Annual General Meeting

Heartbeat Victoria's 2025-2026 Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 8 September, via Zoom. Delegates from most of the Heartbeat affiliates and branches across Victoria attended, as well as other members of Heartbeat branches.

The agenda included consideration of the Annual Report, including annual financial statements, and the election of Board members. Board Member, Dr Jennifer Irvine also shared her heart health journey through a presentation entitled "Second, Third and Fourth Chances". At the meeting, new Rules of Association were also approved and adopted, replacing Rules adopted in 2015.

Elections were held for vacant positions on the Board and John Allen, Christine Rees (President), Elaine Gregory and Barry Nixon were re-elected for a further two year term. In addition, Amy Lock was elected as Secretary, Deb Mackellin was elected as a general Board member, and Mark Vorstenbosch was elected as Vice-President for two year terms (see below).

Board Secretary, Vivien Williamson, chose not to renominate for the Board and we thank her for her service, both as Secretary for two years and prior to that as an advisor to the Board following the resignation of the previous Board in 2022, while at the same time Secretary of Heartbeat Bendigo.

New Board Members

Amy Lock - Secretary



Amy Lock is a senior governance professional with more than 12 years' experience supporting boards and committees across the financial services sector, with a particular focus on corporate governance, company secretariat, risk oversight and board effectiveness. She currently works in governance within the superannuation industry and is passionate about helping organisations achieve their objectives through strong governance and sound decision-making.

Amy is looking forward to contributing her governance, compliance and organisational expertise to support the Board and the organisation's continued growth and sustainability. The work of Heartbeat Victoria is personally meaningful to Amy, whose family has been directly affected by heart disease. She is passionate about supporting an organisation that provides connection, information and peer support to people living with heart

disease across Victoria.

On August 19, Amy gave birth to her second child, Desi Everett. Congratulations!!

Deb Mackellin – Board Member

Deb Mackellin is a registered nurse, public health professional and passionate consumer advocate with a lifelong connection to cardiovascular health.

Born with complex congenital heart disease, Deb has lived through multiple cardiac surgeries and decades of navigating the healthcare system. This personal experience, combined with her professional background in critical care and coronary care nursing, has given her a unique perspective on both sides of the healthcare experience.



Deb and her husband Justin founded and ran I-Nurse for almost 20 years, providing highly skilled critical care nurses to hospitals across Victoria. During that time, she employed more than 1,200 nurses and developed a deep appreciation for the importance of strong clinical leadership, teamwork and compassionate care.

Since completing her Master of Public Health at the University of Melbourne in 2025, Deb has increasingly focused on cardiovascular health, consumer engagement, research and improving care for people living with congenital and acquired heart disease.

Deb is the Senior Projects Officer for the National Cardiac Registry, is involved in several cardiovascular advisory and research initiatives and is delighted to join the Heartbeat Victoria Inc. Council. Deb hopes to bring her lived experience, professional knowledge and genuine passion for people and better health outcomes to the role.

Mark Vorstenbosch – Vice-President



Mark comes to the Board as the current President of the Heartbeat Ballarat. Mark has not long ago lost his own wife to a cardiac event and is passionate about making a difference in this space. Prior to this, Mark's involvement with Heartbeat Ballarat has seen the difference that engagement, walking groups, and peer to peer conversations, can make to people.

Mark is no stranger to battling chronic disease, as he has been managing conditions for the past 30 years. Mark brings considerable communication skills to the Board through his role as a licensed real estate agent running in running a real estate branch, and his previous background as a professional actor, singer and director. He brings energy and experience in the management space having held roles such as National Sales Manager, Commercial Sales Manager and International Sales Manager in the past.

Mostly however, Mark believes that teamwork makes the most difference, and aims to bring a collaborative spirit to the Board, believing, that through process, sharing ideas and energy, the most gains can be made.

New Rules of Association

Also, at the AGM, new Rules of Association were approved and adopted for Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc., to replace Rules adopted in 2015.

The new Rules were developed following a comprehensive review of the existing Rules to ensure they better reflect the way Heartbeat Victoria now operates, support good governance, and align with legislation.

The new Rules do not change the fundamental purpose of Heartbeat Victoria. Instead, they ensure the Rules better reflect the way the organisation operates today and provide a clearer and more contemporary governance framework to support the organisation into the future.

In particular, the new Rules provide:

- A stronger approach to Board appointments;
- Simplified membership categories;
- A clearer framework for local branches; and
- Improved financial governance.

The new Rules do not change:

- Heartbeat Victoria's charitable purpose;
- the organisation's commitment to supporting people living with heart disease and their families;
- the important role of branches in supporting peer support throughout Victoria;
- the not-for-profit status of the organisation; or
- members' role in electing Board members.

The next step is for the new Rules to be lodged with Consumer Affairs Victoria for registration and they will take effect in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic)*.

New Walking Group in Bendigo



**Bendigo Botanic
Garden Walkers**

Although in 2025 Heartbeat Bendigo Inc was unable to continue, due to not being able to form a Committee, Heartbeat Victoria has been keen to establish a Heart Foundation walking group in Bendigo to continue to support its local cardiac community.

A new Bendigo Walking Group has now been formed and the first walk has been set for Thursday, September 17th. It will be co-sponsored by Heartbeat Victoria and Heart Foundation Walking.

Board Member, John Allen, will serve as the initial Walk Organizer, until someone local to Bendigo can be found to take the lead.

Here are the details for the Group, to be known as the "Bendigo Botanic Garden Walkers":

- Initially, the Group will walk on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 10:00am.
- The Group's first walk will be September 17th.
- The meeting point will be on the front deck of Omari Bendigo Café, at the Garden (27/[32 Hamelin St, White Hills VIC 3550](#))
- The walk will be at an easy pace in the Botanic Gardens, for 30-45 minutes, and pets are welcome.
- The Group will get together for a cuppa after the walk.

For more information, or to register for the walking group, this is the Heart Foundation Walking page: <https://www.heartfoundationwalking.org.au/fundraisers/id-a1ud3f/bendigo-botanic-garden-walkers>.

Heart Health



Your 'Just Right' day: The Goldilocks Formula for Better Heart Health

Source: Baker Institute Newsletter: Summer Edition 2026

Most people already know they should move more, sit less and prioritise sleep, yet real life rarely plays along.



Between work, family routines, friends and screen time, the best intentions can quickly seem out of reach.

It's no surprise so many Australians feel guilty for not getting

it "right" when it comes to their health.

A study led by Christian Brakenridge at Swinburne University (a Baker Heart and Diabetes PhD graduate) and Professor David Dunstan (pictured) at the Baker Institute brings together evidence to help map out the ideal balance across a full day.

It's called the Goldilocks approach. Not too much, not too little, but a blend of behaviours that supports healthier hearts and better metabolic function.

By analysing the daily routines of more than 2000 adults, the team identified a pattern associated with improved blood pressure, glucose control and overall cardiometabolic health.

The ideal balance is:

- eight hours and thirty minutes of sleep
- six hours of sitting
- five hours and ten minutes of standing
- two hours and ten minutes of light activity
- two hours and ten minutes of moderate to vigorous activity

Of course, the average Australian sits closer to nine or ten hours a day, sleeps just over seven hours and fits in far less movement than recommended. But there's no need to despair, one of the most encouraging findings in the research is that perfection is not required.

Replacing even small amounts of sitting with light activity was linked to healthier blood sugar levels, particularly for people living with type 2 diabetes. Short bursts of movement, such as climbing stairs or a quick five-minute walk, were associated with improvements in stress hormones, mood and cognitive performance. These benefits appeared long before participants reached the ideal Goldilocks balance.

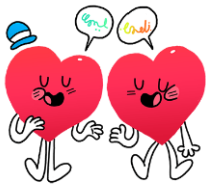
The growing body of research is clear. Movement does not need to be long, structured or formal exercise to make a difference.

Small incidental moments throughout the day matter. Tidying the house, gardening for a few minutes, choosing a slightly longer walking route, stretching after waking up or taking a brief standing break all contribute to better health. Every bit counts and the effects accumulate.

This is why the Goldilocks approach makes sense. It takes away the pressure to be perfect and replaces it with a more achievable way forward. Even if most days are far from perfect, each small choice still moves the body in the right direction and that's all it takes to make a day just right.



Photo by RDNE Stock project



Heart to Heart

featuring one member's heart health or peer support experience

Graeme Tulloch and *Hands on Heart Australia*

While riding his bike on a hot day in Mildura 10 years ago, Heartbeat Sunraysia member, Graeme Tulloch — former elite footballer, senior coach and school teacher — suffered a cardiac arrest.

Fortunately, several people came to his aid, called triple 000 and began CPR on him. Those administering CPR worked for eight minutes, applying hundreds of chest compressions before the ambulance arrived. Graeme was subsequently flown to Melbourne by air ambulance and transferred to St Vincent's where he was put in an induced coma for five days.

Graeme's life had been saved by the timely intervention of passing strangers. "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here today," says Graeme.

While he has little memory of the events of that day, that experience, and the passing of Shane Warne, became the catalyst for Graeme, and other supporters, including former school friend and author Phil Kettle, whose brother suffered a fatal cardiac arrest, to create the 'Hands on Heart' program that teaches emergency cardiopulmonary resuscitation – CPR.

Administered by the Mildura Lions Club, and supported by Angela Izard First Aid and local sponsors, *Hands on Heart Australia* is a community program that provides free CPR training to the community, with a strong focus on educating children.

As reported by the Heart Foundation, over 32,000 people in Australia have a cardiac arrest every year, only about 10% of people who have a cardiac arrest out of hospital survive, but when CPR is performed and an AED is used, survival rates can increase to 60-70%.

The primary goal of the *Hands on Heart Australia* program is to equip individuals with the skills and confidence to respond to cardiac emergencies and thereby improve survival rates for those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest across Mildura and surrounding areas.

Since its inception in May 2023, more than 1,665 people have been trained in the Sunraysia area. Twenty one schools have taken up the opportunity to be involved, mainly Year 6 students and many community groups have also undertaken the free CPR courses.



The program has received great financial support from businesses and individuals- over \$60,00 since June 2023, and the Mildura Health Fund is a major sponsor.

Graeme's goal is to have 2000 people trained in CPR in his local community in the next two years.

The initiative has also expanded to other parts of Australia through the Lions Club network, including, most recently, Cabarita Beach Pottsville Lions Club.

Further information can be found via

<https://www.handsonheartaustralia.com>





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

Goulburn Valley

Heartbeat Victoria - Goulburn Valley Branch

Through the winter months, Goulburn Valley Branch has had a reduction in Heartbeat activities. Some of our members choose to travel to places with warmer weather to help support their heart health and wellbeing. Due to weather conditions, others do not like to travel at night.

In June, we had our only night dinner meeting in the winter, followed by no activities in July.

In August, our members met for a social luncheon at the RSL Club Shepparton and our usual third Thursday coffee morning.

From September, we will be back to meeting again on the first Monday evening of each month, with a dinner meeting at the Peppermill Inn Hotel. The September dinner will be followed by guest presenter Karen Saccuzzo, Volunteer Coordinator, Goulburn Valley Health, who will expand on the importance of the role of volunteers in many areas of GVH.

On October 5th, following our dinner, Heartbeat Victoria Goulburn Valley Branch will hold its AGM at 7.00pm.

Heartbeat Tatura Group

Heartbeat Tatura walking group continues to meet on Monday mornings at 10.00am weekly, with an enthusiastic group of walkers, put off only by some rainy days. All are looking forward to the warmer spring days.

Heartbeat Tatura Group's meetings continue on every third Monday, monthly. The group of members meet at 11.00am, after the Tatura walk, for a meeting and to share information about heart health and wellbeing.

At the August meeting, Marg presented information from the Department of Health, about My Health Record - Digital health - Viewing test results and scans in My Health Record. Members watched a new video resource available to help patients better understand how they can access pathology and diagnostic imaging reports in My Health Record via the Medicare app or online. It covers privacy settings, how to request that reports not be uploaded and what to do if information is missing or incorrect.



In September, members will meet to travel to Rushworth for a walk and viewing of wildflowers in Rushworth Forest, followed by a picnic lunch.

An information session about "Stroke Awareness" will be conducted by Ambulance Victoria, at Tatura Community House on Monday, October 19th at 11.00am.

Act F.A.S.T. saves lives.

- What is a stroke
- Signs and symptoms of stroke
- When and how to call Triple Zero (000)
- Tips to stay healthy and reduce your stroke risk

The event is open to anyone interested in attending to learn about this important health topic.

Ballarat



Heartbeat Ballarat will hold the third Kevin Tolhurst Memorial Walk indoors at the Ballarat Badminton Stadium, Dowling Street, Wendouree at 10.00am on Tuesday October 6th.

Former Heartbeat Ballarat member, volunteer, passionate walker, and patient advocate, Associate Professor Kevin Tolhurst AM, passed away suddenly in October 2023.

The Kevin Tolhurst Memorial Walk is held annually in October to remember Kevin and all previous members of Heartbeat Ballarat who have passed.

Prior to his passing, Kevin shared his Heartbeat realisations:

"My wife and I attended most of the monthly Heartbeat meetings. These meetings were incredibly useful for my wife and me. I started to better understand how I could live a full life with heart disease. I better understood what questions I should be asking of my GP and cardiologist. I also understood that heart disease experience is unique to each person, but there are some common elements.

I made some good friends at Heartbeat and have benefited greatly from their peer support and the support of the health professionals who work with Heartbeat."



Ballarat members photographed at the Second Kevin Tolhurst Memorial Walk held in October 2025

As we get older, the cold and wet of winter in Ballarat can take a toll on our ageing bodies. Several of our Ballarat Heartbeat Walkers have recently passed away, had heart trauma events, had cancer diagnoses or succumbed to severe flu or pneumonia. We send our deepest condolences to the family and friends of those who have passed.

To those dealing with ongoing medical issues, we send our thoughts and best wishes for speedy recoveries and hope to see you back walking with us soon. Please speak to any of the committee members if you know of a member in need of a visit or support.

Our Ballarat Committee Members are Mark Vorstenbosch, Helen Sarra, Barry Nixon, Anne Gow, Bernie Brisbane, Lyn Webb, Leigh Miller, Ruth Close and Alan Bell.

Excitement is building in anticipation of three upcoming major events:

- In October we will be welcoming two Heartbeat Victoria Board members to Ballarat - Professor Rebecca Ritchie and Christine Rees.



Dinner Meeting with Prof Rebecca Ritchie

Black Hill Hotel
Wednesday 7th October
6:30pm meal, 7pm guest speaker
502, Peel Street North



Professor Rebecca Ritchie obtained her PhD in Adelaide, in the Cardiology Unit of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Before joining Monash Uni, Rebecca was USA-based at Wayne State University. Her research focuses on arresting the progression of heart failure.

Professor Ritchie is to be the guest speaker at a members Meet, Greet, and Eat event to be held at the Black Hill Hotel, from 6.30pm on Wednesday October 7th.

- The annual Heartbeat Ballarat Christmas Celebration will be held on Saturday, December 12th. All are welcome. \$35.00 per person plus own drinks.
- Then, in early January 2027, we celebrate the fortieth annual Heartbeat Bowls Tournament. The whole Heartbeat Ballarat Committee will be involved in this fundraiser. Funds raised are

distributed equally between both Ballarat hospitals. To date, this annual fund raiser has donated \$190,000. We applaud Ross Jones for his commitment and drive for this event over many consecutive years. Well done Ross!



Bowls fundraiser Ross Jones and Heartbeat Ballarat members at a previous January bowls event

Fawkner Park Walking Group



There was a good turnout for the group's August walk, with 11 walkers. It was a cool, grey day with some drizzle – not bad for August!

The group included 2 walkers from the local community, 4 Heartbeat Board members (Rebecca, Vivien, Andrew and John) and 5 Baker staff (Daniel, Nick and 3 researchers).

The next walk will take place on the second Thursday of October, which is October 8.

Please send us your latest news for inclusion in the Summer 2026 edition of Heartbeat Happenings, which will be published in November (send to secretary@heartbeatvictoria.org.au by Friday October 30, 2026).