



**Heartbeat
Victoria**

Heartbeat Happenings

Summer 2023

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

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BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President: Linda Macaulay

Vice President: Christine Rees

Secretary: Barry Nixon

Treasurer: Karen Saccuzzo

Assistant Treasurer: Tamieka Snowden

Board Members: Mark Braybrook; Robyn Fennell; Gail Newton; Kevin Reid

VISION: To be an excellent and well recognised peer support organisation which assists in improving the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of people living with heart disease or a heart condition.

MISSION: To advise and promote associated support groups in conducting peer support activities for people living with heart disease, to ensure they have a better understanding of the impact of their heart disease or condition; how they might seek ongoing services and support in their local area; and how to raise funds to improve cardiac services.

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Board Election Results

The Annual General Meeting of Heartbeat Victoria Council Incorporated was held via Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday September 13, 2023.

At that meeting elections were held for vacant positions on the Board, with the following results:

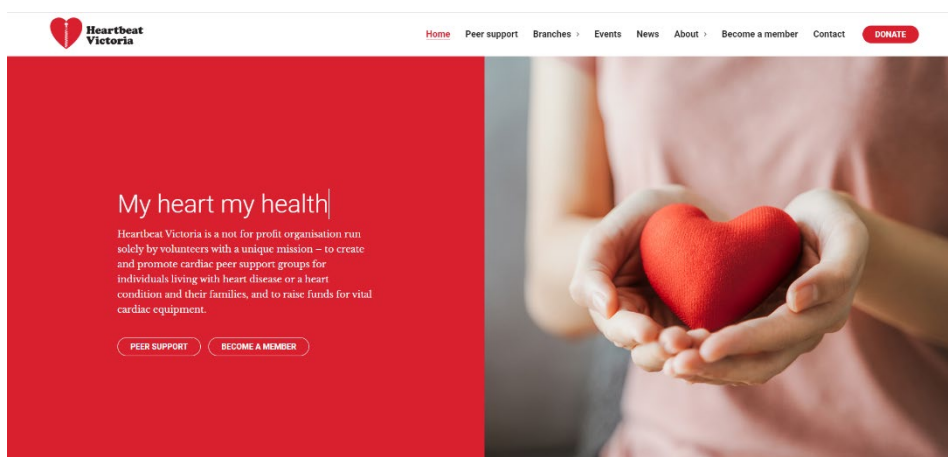
- President: Linda Macaulay
- Vice President: Christine Rees
- Secretary: Barry Nixon
- Treasurer: Karen Saccuzzo
- Assistant Treasurer: Tamieka Snowden (continuing as appointed less than two years ago)
- Board Members: Mark Braybrook; Robyn Fennell (one year term); Gail Newton; and Kevin Reid

Fees for Membership

At the Annual General Meeting, it was also resolved to set the Heartbeat Victoria annual membership and insurance levy at \$7 (previously \$5) per member. The levy will cover insurance for all branches and affiliates as well as other forms of support provided by Heartbeat Victoria.

Our new website

A major project for the Board during the past year has been the updating of the Heartbeat Victoria website



The site is now live and can be found at www.heartbeatvictoria.org.au and, in addition to information about Heartbeat Victoria and information relevant to peer support and heart health and wellbeing, includes the opportunity for each branch or affiliate to include information specific to their activities.

Just a few weeks after the upgrade, Heartbeat Victoria has seen an 18% increase in Google visibility!

Connection and Advocacy

Partnerships

At the October meeting of the Board Christine Rees was nominated to manage the Board's Partnership portfolio, one role of which is to check and promote requests for consumer help in research and education and to raise the awareness of heart disease in the population.

The first involvement to report on is that with Sydney University SOLVE CHD researchers. This will give Heartbeat Victoria access to information from the university and the research group. Recently Christine attended a project showcase of a variety of research projects. Some of the relevant projects included Brain Fog, Heart Pathways and The Measure It Project. There were many more projects presented, some on the rehabilitation systems and delivery and, as always, the economic impact of cardiac rehabilitation. A number of projects focused on the use of AI and digital media.

Heartbeat Victoria's primary focus is on people helping people at a local level and this will be conveyed to the researchers.

The second involvement has been with The Baker Institute. The Board is currently working on a memorandum of understanding so we can all get the heart message out there and support each other.

Conversations

Heartbeat Victoria is regularly invited to present to a range of medical and community groups. Recently Christine Rees presented at a group session for members of the Melbourne Eastern Branch of the Association of Independent Retirees.

That group has written to say that it thoroughly enjoyed her presentation with all its useful information, and great style of presenting and is keen to learn more about Heartbeat.

Two further conference presentations are planned to healthcare and research professionals in the coming months.

Presentations

Heartbeat Victoria has developed a standard presentation on PowerPoint for all members to use when asked to speak on behalf of Heartbeat to local community groups. It would be wonderful to have more members brush up their presentation skills. This will help improve local membership numbers and help people understand more about the prevalence of cardiac disease in our areas. If these presentations encourage one person to have a Heart Check or donate to improve resources for local people it is worthwhile. Members are encouraged to contact Heartbeat Victoria if they would like to be part of a Presentation Skills workshop.



Heart medications - Frequently asked questions

(Extract from: Heart Foundation <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Bundles/Support/Heart-Medicines-FAQ>)

Key takeaways:

- Take medicines as instructed by your doctor or pharmacist. Don't crush or break tablets, or open capsules, unless your doctor or pharmacist has told you to.
- Speak to your doctor or pharmacist before you stop taking a medicine or change the dose. This is important, even if you feel well.
- All medicines have possible side effects. Before starting a new medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist about possible side effects. If you get a side effect, speak to your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting a new 'over-the-counter' medicine. Common over-the-counter medicines include aspirin, pain medicines, cold and flu tablets, supplements and vitamins.
- Speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you are finding it difficult to take your medicines, including if you have trouble remembering to take them.
- If your medicines are too expensive, have a chat to your doctor or pharmacist about what options are available.

If you take a heart medicine, you may have a few questions. It's important you understand your medicines, what they're for, and how to take them correctly. If you've had a heart attack, your doctor may have started you on several medicines before leaving hospital. You will need to keep taking these when you go home.

If you have a question that is not in the list below, speak with your doctor or pharmacist. You can also call the NPS MedicineWise Medicines Line 1300 633 424.

Why is it important to take my heart medicines?

It is important to take your heart medicines to:

- Reduce your risk of future heart problems.
- Manage your symptoms.
- Improve your quality of life.
- Help keep you out of hospital.
- Help you live longer.

Each medicine can help your heart in different ways.

How do I take my heart medicines?

Your doctor or pharmacist will give you information about how and when to take each medicine. Each medicine should also come with a consumer medicines information leaflet. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is not there. You can also find the consumer medicines information by searching on the NPS MedicineWise Medicine Finder.

Heart medicines can come in different forms. These include tablets, capsules, sprays or patches.

Some medicines for heart conditions need to be taken regularly (for example, blood pressure medicines). For some other medicines, you might only need them when you have symptoms (for example, mouth spray for angina (chest pain)). You should always keep these types of medicines with you in case you get symptoms. Remember to check the expiry date if you don't use these medicines often. Always check with your pharmacist or doctor about the correct way to take your heart medicine.

Can I use cheaper (generic) brands of medicines?

When you have a prescription filled at a pharmacy, your pharmacist may ask you if you'd like to buy the cheaper (or generic) brand of a medicine.

Generic medicines are as effective and safe as the brand name medicines. This is because they contain the same chemical (active ingredient). But it is important to remember a few things:

- Your doctor may want you to take a certain brand of medicine. If this is the case, they will tick the "Brand substitution not permitted" box on your prescription.
- Some medicines have many different generic brands. Each generic brand may have different packaging and the medicines can be quite different. This includes the shape, colour, smell and taste.
- Some people prefer to stick to their brand name medicine to avoid confusion, especially if they take a lot of medicines.

If you have allergies, you should ask your doctor or pharmacist before switching to a generic medicine. This is because it can contain other ingredients you might be allergic to.

What if I have trouble taking my medicine?

There are a range of reasons why some people may find it difficult to take their medicines. They might have difficulty swallowing tablets. Or some people find it hard to open the medicine packaging. If you are having trouble, it's best to speak to your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible. They can help you find a solution.

Remember:

- Don't crush or break tablets to make them easier to swallow (unless your doctor or pharmacist has told you to do this).
- Don't open capsules and mix the medicine inside with water. This can affect how well the medicine works.
- Don't stop taking your medicine or change the dose, even if you feel well.

If you find it hard to read the information on your medicines packaging, you can ask your pharmacist to print a label with large text.

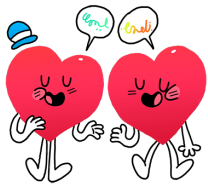
How long do I need to take my heart medications for?

Many heart conditions affect people throughout their life. They may need to take heart medicines for their whole life. Each person's heart medicines may change over time including the type of medicine and the dose. You might only need to take some heart medicines for a short time, for example after having a heart procedure like a stent insertion.

It's important to know when you started each heart medicine and how long you need to take it for. You can write down the date or month you started each medicine.

Once you're feeling better, you might start to think you don't need your heart medicines any more. It's important to continue taking them though, as they are keeping you well. Taking your medicine can reduce the risk of a future heart attack and other problems down the track.

If you want to stop taking a medicine or change the dose, it's important to speak with your doctor first.



Heart to Heart

Jeff Gregory – President Sunraysia Heartbeat – Personal Journey



I suffered severe chest pain while out, so an ambulance was called and I was transferred to Mildura Hospital. After a couple of days in hospital and visits from a cardiologist, it was arranged for me to go to Box Hill Private Hospital, six hours away, for the next two weeks. After having an angiogram one stent was done but there was another blockage which couldn't be done, so a few more days in hospital having medication to try and move the blockage. It didn't work but the doctor was happy for me to be discharged and to go home as there was no more pain.

Two years later I had more severe chest pain, when I rested this time, not from working or exercise, so another trip to Box Hill Private Hospital, where an angiogram was performed again but this time no stent could be performed, so home for ten days to go off medication so a triple bypass could be done. I was only home for seven days and the chest pain returned. An ambulance was called to the house at 3.30am, and by 10.30am that Sunday morning I was flown via air ambulance to Box Hill Hospital and by the Tuesday I had had a quadruple bypass. I returned to Mildura via air ambulance ten days later, to Mildura Private Hospital for two nights.

It all was a big wake up call to me personally, business and working wise. Being self-employed it was very hard as I couldn't work for seven months, as my trade being paving and lawn mowing, it was out of the question to even attempt it.

My sisters didn't understand heart disease and still don't, and one especially just thought if I exercised more it would all be good. At the time there was not really a lot of support available. I was referred for cardiac rehabilitation but there was a couple of months wait to start and during that time there was no real support to see how I was dealing with it all. Very little was given to me really on how little I would be able to do after the operation, especially no support on the mental side of such a major operation, and as a male I found it very hard to cope with it all.

My wife attended the cardio classes with me and she was the one to start attending the peer support group meetings. It was probably twelve months before I went along with her. I have now been President of our local support group for five years and enjoy the social side of it.

Condolences

Kevin Tolhurst

The Board of Heartbeat Victoria extends sincere condolences on the passing on October 5 of Ballarat member Kevin Tolhurst, whose story was featured in the previous edition of Heartbeat Happenings.

Kevin shared his experience of living with cardiac illness with Ballarat peer support group members at meetings and on regular planned walks and with new patients at Saint John of God hospital outpatients.

Kevin benefitted Ballarat members and many newly diagnosed patients by explaining how to prepare before, and how to make best use of short appointments with cardiologists and GPs. Kevin always willingly shared his own patient story and lived experiences and realizations. Kevin's kindness and sharing benefited many fellow Grampians cardiac patients.

Kevin also recorded and edited a series of videos for broadcast at Cardiac Rehabilitation Education Sessions, filming fellow patients talking of their benefiting from attending Cardiac Rehabilitation programs and from social connection via Heartbeat Ballarat's cardiac peer support and walking groups.

Heartbeat Ballarat greatly appreciated Kevin's volunteering, assisting with fundraising, encouraging others to walk regularly, sharing his patient story and his lived experiences. Heartbeat Ballarat will remember Kevin with warmth and genuine appreciation.

John Grenon

The Board of Heartbeat Victoria extends deepest sympathy to Janne, Rosalie and the extended Grenon Family on the recent passing of John on October 12th. John was an active member of Heartbeat South Gippsland.

Condolences to all South Gippsland Branch members.

Glen Stewart

The Board of Heartbeat Victoria extends sincere condolences on the passing of new Sunraysia member Glen Stewart on October 15th.

Sunraysia Branch and Glen's family you are in our thoughts.



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

Goulburn Valley

October was quite a busy month for our Branch. At the Annual General Meeting, Lance Brown the President and his partner, Deanne our Treasurer, resigned their positions after five years of dedicated volunteering in these roles. We now have a new president, Max Hyland and look forward to Max's leadership and new ideas for 2023-24. It remains difficult to attract volunteers to the office bearer's positions on our committee and we are still looking for a person to take on the Treasurer's position.

On October 3rd our Branch featured in a media article by Lauren Formica, journalist for *Shepparton News*. This article "Heartbeat Victoria volunteers supporting GVH for over 30 years" outlined what the group offers and the benefits to heart patients and carers, including the Branch fundraising contributions. It is hoped that this media article will raise the profile of HB GV Branch in our community and appreciate the support of Shepparton News and staff.

The article was supported by the Goulburn Valley Health's clinical director of cardiology, Dr Jennifer Collier who was quoted as saying that:

After a cardiac event, a lot of people do have issues with anxiety and low mood, so to have the support of other people that have gone through the same issues before is a compelling experience.

Since 1990, Heartbeat's GV branch has raised \$297,322 towards cardiac and emergency service equipment for GV Health.

Recently, it made a \$13,800 contribution towards much-needed ambulatory blood pressure monitors for the hospital. The monitor allows testing to be done at fixed intervals throughout a 24-hour period, unlike previous monitors that capture a one-off measurement. The machine is the gold standard for assessing what blood pressure control is like, and it's helpful because it gives a longer-term measurement. This is particularly valuable for people whose blood pressure goes up and down a lot, so it gives us an accurate indication of the appropriate treatment.

Dr Collier also said the donations made by the volunteer group through its fundraising events were a testament to its ability to work collaboratively with the cardiology team to develop a holistic service.

"It's exciting to be developing a wrap-around service where we offer the consultations but also tests and peer support," she said.

The coffee mornings are well attended, with members often staying to share lunch and continue chatting. For the October walk and picnic lunch, a small group ventured to the Australian Botanical Gardens in Shepparton. These gardens commenced development in 2011 and are operated by a team of volunteers in conjunction with Shepparton City Council. The gardens are set in close proximity to the Goulburn River, which adds to the whole ambience of the landscaping and Australian plant theme. It was lovely to see many of the plants in flower.



The November meeting was a fundraising dinner with Christmas theme at the home of Jenny and Max Hyland. The beautiful Christmas decorations on the tables and in the room created a delightful atmosphere for the 30 members present. All enjoyed a three-course meal, thanks to the volunteer efforts of members and friends.

At this dinner our

guest was Dr. Muhammed Aydin, Cardiologist who has recently joined the GVH Cardiology team. Dr Aydin introduced himself to members outlining his medical training and move to Shepparton with his wife and two girls. We wish him all the best as he settles into the Goulburn Valley to work at GVH in Cardiology and Emergency services areas.



Dr Muhammed Aydin, Cardiologist, GVH.



The HB GV Branch team of Cardiac Rehab Volunteers are now back again, following the long COVID break, with one volunteer attending the program each week and providing a speaker each 8 weeks, to enlighten those present about our peer support group and its benefits.

Past president Lance Brown and some of our Cardiac Rehabilitation Volunteer team

Sunraysia



In October our President Jeff Gregory and Vice President Des Wakefield presented Jacob McEwan, our Paramedic Community Support Coordinator for Ambulance Victoria, with a cheque for \$1434-40 as a donation to the First Responder Volunteers in the Loddon Mallee region.

This donation was used to purchase 4 portable automatic Blood Pressure machines for the use of trained community members who attend 000 calls in their communities and render assistance until the nearest paramedic unit can back them up. It will replace two of the devices with new upgraded

machines for the Patchewollock and Murrayville teams and the purchase of two other machines for the Manangatang and Nangiloc will be of great benefit for their teams as they have never had them in their units before now.

On behalf of Heartbeat Sunraysia Support group we are pleased to be able to support Rural Victoria First Responder Volunteers with a much needed donation.

Also in October President Jeff and Secretary Elaine, along with their three grandsons Tatum, Huxley and Jonty were presented with a \$100 donation from Jess at Goodstart Early Learning Centre, Mildura, from money raised from gold coin fundraising days at their centre. Jess was looking for a local support group and thought our Heartbeat group was ideal.

Our monthly coffee catch ups are still being enjoyed by everyone and our monthly meetings are also well attended. Our Christmas get-together will be held on 6th December at “Enjoy Wine”, which will wind up 2023 for us. We will return in February.



Ballarat



Bernie and Elizabeth Brisbane represented Heartbeat Ballarat at Grampians Health catered event for local General Practitioners and Practice Nurses held on Wednesday 13th September.

Held at Moon & Mountain, Heart Failure and Rapid Atrial Fibrillation were the subjects at the information night. All attending general practitioners and practice nurses left with a substantial information pack that included two brochures promoting Heartbeat Ballarat Peer Support and Heartbeat Walking Groups.

Novartis sponsored the event and Heartbeat Ballarat signage was prominently displayed. Thanks to Bernie and Liz for volunteering and thank you Grampians Health for the opportunity.

Heartbeat Ballarat recently called out for donations of digital body scales with a goal to prevent heart failure emergencies and ease pressure on hospitals. With the support of individuals across the community, 100 scales were received to support patients in the Grampians Health network. To read more about it

<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballarat/news/scales-drive-keeps-hearts-beating/>

Twenty five Heartbeat Ballarat members enjoyed a pub lunch (early November) to celebrate 6 years of Heartbeat Ballarat Walks and 5 years of Indoor Walking Group.

Heartbeat Ballarat has also recently received a grant of \$4700 from Ballarat City Council for the development of a promotional video.



Bendigo

Heartbeat Bendigo held its Annual General Meeting on in October and were pleased to welcome an additional Committee member. The Branch also enjoyed a very successful social and fund raising event with Kay's Fashions.

One hundred and nine ladies attended the event which included raffle prizes and our famous afternoon tea and Kay's garment racks were given a real work out.

The next events being organised are the annual Christmas lunch at Bendigo Pottery on 26 November and a visit to the Tongala Christmas hay bale art and murals on 11 December.



Heartbeat Bendigo was also pleased to make a donation of \$14,550 to Dhimaya Health - Castlemaine site for the purchase of three portable ECG machines for its three aged care facilities.

Please send us your latest news for inclusion in the Autumn 2024 edition of Heartbeat Happenings which will be published in March (please send to Vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au by no later than Friday February 23, 2024