



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



Heartbeat Victoria has been saddened by the loss of a number of long-term members and we wish their families, friends and Heartbeat buddies our sincere condolences.

Bendigo Branch has farewelled its President Frank Ward. Frank was a very active member, taking on extra

roles and working hard for the cardiac community around Bendigo. To Nola and family our thoughts are with you.

Just a reminder to those with DEFIBRILLATORS, the pads and battery need to be checked for use by dates. While this equipment is very helpful in a sudden cardiac arrest, it does need to be maintained. Your local provider or ambulance service may be able to assist. Ambulance Victoria also has a system for registering your device and its location.

Over the year we get many requests for speakers and cardiac consumers to share their experiences with the community. If you would like to be involved, we would love to talk to you. Training is available and you can register your interest through the website at

hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au .

Christmas is almost here, and on behalf of the Board of Heartbeat Victoria, I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to working with you in 2026.





Sharing our experiences

During the last few months, Heartbeat Victoria President, Christine Rees, has attended and spoken at a number of functions. Recently Christine presented at the National Hypertension Summit, a very interesting meeting that involved research findings, guideline updating workshops and looking at the future of hypertension management. The guidelines are documents or advisory notes to guide the management of a condition. Most conditions will have guidelines to assist in managing the condition via the most scientific best practice and with the latest medications.



Keeping the guideline documents up to date and ensuring all expert opinions are heard is a vital and constant function of our health care system. Consumers are involved in meetings regarding guidelines, as they have information about living with these conditions and the issues that are relevant to them. Assisting researchers, like our very own Professor Andrew Murphy and Professor Rebecca Ritchie, and their teams, is a very important role. Consumers have much to add and are welcomed into the teams.

We would like more of our members to become involved and be trained and supported to help make this an enriching experience. The Board would welcome assistance, as more requests for speakers and involvement are being received. If you would like to be involved in expanding your knowledge and experience in these areas, please make contact through the website. We will work with you to find a role that suits your interests and support you as much as possible to gain and share your skills and knowledge of heart disease. If you are interested, get in touch at hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au.

Assistance from Heartbeat Victoria's Treasurer

The Board's new Treasurer, David Stella, has hit the ground running in assisting Branches with their financial reporting. David has prepared a standard spreadsheet to assist Branches with the quarterly financial reporting to the Board that they are required to provide. David can be contacted via email (david@heartbeatvictoria.org.au) in relation to financial matters.

Merchandise



Heartbeat Victoria has a range of merchandise for purchase by Branches and Affiliates.

This merchandise, and the related costs, includes:

Lapel badges - \$3.00

Pens – \$2.00

Stickers - \$6.00 for 20

Service badges (Lifetime, 20 years and 15 years)

There are limited numbers of some items.

If a branch or affiliate would like to order any items, please contact Heartbeat Victoria's Secretary, Vivien Williamson, via email (vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au) or telephone (0400 657954) and, once payment is received (including the cost of postage which will be advised following receipt of any order), the items will be posted.



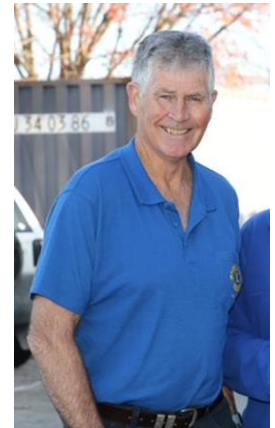
What's been happening at some of our branches and affiliates lately?

Sunraysia

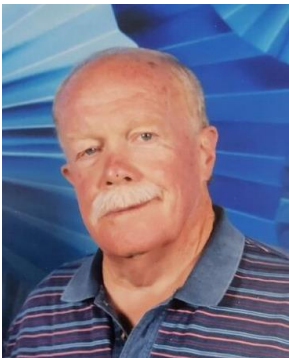
Heartbeat Sunraysia's membership has been growing and the group is continuing to hold its regular cuppa catch ups each month.

In November, Graeme Tulloch was the guest speaker. Graeme, a Mildura teacher, survived a cardiac arrest in 2014 and has started up 'Hands on Heart Australia', a not-for-profit organisation, which, in partnership with the Mildura Lions Club and with the support of local sponsors, delivers free CPR classes in the Sunraysia region, with a focus on educating children.

Heartbeat Sunraysia will be celebrating Christmas at a dinner at the Mildura Workingman's Club and resuming our cuppa catchups and meetings in February 2026.



Bendigo



The past few months have been a very sad and challenging time for Heartbeat Bendigo.

In October 2025, our long serving and hardworking President, Frank Ward, passed away. Frank had been a member of Heartbeat Bendigo since 2014 and President since 2016. His wife, Nola Ward, was Heartbeat Bendigo's Treasurer for the same period.

At its most recent General Meeting, the members voted to support several donations to local health services for the purchase of cardiac related equipment, including:

- Bendigo Health - \$25,000
- St John of God Hospital, Bendigo - \$10,000
- Maldon Hospital - \$4,000
- Dhelkaya Health (Castlemaine) - \$4,000
- Inglewood and Districts Health Service - \$4,000

At the Annual General Meeting held in November, which had been delayed due to Frank's illness, there were no nominations for Committee positions, therefore the group will not be continuing on a formal basis. However some members will continue to catch up for informal social gatherings.

Goulburn Valley

Heartbeat Victoria - Goulburn Valley Branch and Tatura Group have had a busy calendar of social, educational and fundraising activities over the last three months.

A successful AGM was held in October. All Committee positions were filled, except that of a new or assistant secretary. However members decided at the general meeting to modify our activities and administration of the group to lessen the workload on volunteers, without impacting the valuable branch peer support. The main changes will be communication emails and group SMS to replace the monthly newsletter, luncheons to be bimonthly, coffee mornings at the same venue on third Thursday each month. The monthly dinners at the Peppermill Inn Hotel, with a guest presenter or other forms of education, will continue and a calendar of activities will again be developed for distribution at our February 2026 meeting.

Heartbeat Tatura members are also supporting all Heartbeat GV Branch events, which increases our attendance, with twenty-five members attending recent meetings.



The branch has had two recent fundraising events which were very successful. Thanks to all who supported in many ways our recent "High Tea" at



Carole Williams home in October. Special thanks to Carole for suggesting and hosting this wonderful event. Carole's garden looked beautiful and there was more than enough variety of delicious high tea foods. With the ticket sales, raffle and donations a total of \$2,045.00 was raised. Special thanks to Heartbeat Victoria Board Secretary, Vivien Williamson for attending this event.

Lunch was held at the Shamrock Hotel Numurkah in November to catch up with some older members who can no longer travel to our activities and this was enjoyed by all who attended. Several members again volunteered to run a Bunnings BBQ in November, with \$1,878.35 raised on the day.

At the Goulburn Valley Health AGM in November, Robyn Fennell, Secretary of Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Branch was recognized for the Companion award for her volunteering contributions, through her contributions with Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Branch Branch over a long period of time, including monthly volunteer support for cardiac rehabilitation patients; social activities; walks and newsletters; being an office bearer for Heartbeat Goulburn Valley Branch Branch; leading fundraising efforts for cardiac and emergency equipment benefiting Goulburn Valley Health and surrounding services, as well as recently extending her service to Tatura.





Our last meeting for 2025 was a “Christmas get together” - a social night with lots of fun and chatting.

The Heartbeat Tatura walking group has twelve regular walkers and continues Mondays weekly, with several improving the distance they now complete. Tatura walkers and Heartbeat Tatura are also having a Christmas lunch together.

Ballarat

What a wonderful year 2025 has been for our Ballarat Branch. Continuously being proactive, and promoting the availability of peer support, exercise and social connection has seen membership and participation grow. Production of a new promotional video which is shown at Cardiac Rehabilitation Education has also had an immediate impact.

Walking

Ballarat has welcomed a large number of new walkers during the past 12 months, allowing us to maintain our four walks throughout the full year.

- Tuesday 10:00 Indoor Walk at the Badminton Stadium. We have seen an increase in walkers through the year and now average around 35 walkers each Tuesday. Big thanks to Bernie and Liz Brisbane for collecting day old bread and rolls each week. We all look forward to topping up our pantries.
- Wednesday 10:00 Lake Esmond. What a beautiful location this is for a walk, offering a flat walk around the lake or the high track giving spectacular views across the lake. The birdlife and plants are always lovely to see as we walk. We have gained some new walkers during the year, and numbers are averaging around 30+ each Wednesday.
- Friday 10:00 Botanic Gardens. Walking in the sheltered gardens and up to the war memorials has remained popular. The walk is flat, and the displays provided by the botanic gardens staff are always amazing. The birdlife from Lake Wendouree, particularly our gorgeous black swans, is always a bonus. We have averaged 30+ walkers throughout the year.
- Saturday 9:30 Victoria Park Walking Track walk is popular with members who work and who are fitter and faster. We have maintained around 12 walkers during the year.
- Social occasional walks. Several of these have been held during 2025, including a walk and picnic at Kirk's Reservoir and a walk followed by a pub lunch at Greendale. Several of our walkers have also participated in three walks at Fawkner Park (opposite the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne) with the Baker Research Institute Heartbeat Walking Group, followed by lunch with Heart Foundation Board Members.
- The 2nd Annual Heartbeat Memorial Walk was held at Victoria Park to reflect on those walkers who have passed away over the years. The walk was attended by 19 of our members this year.





Peer Support

Ballarat members have continued to provide peer support to those who are in need.

- We have a regular group of Lived Experience volunteers (who have a lived experience with heart trauma) speak to new heart patients in three local rehabilitation programs.
- Regular Meet, Eat & Greet dinner meetings with guest speakers have been held, to educate us on heart and lifestyle themes to help us live longer and better quality lives.
- Our members do home and hospital visits to people who are struggling with health and mental stress. The support they give our members is outstanding and assists with their peers getting back walking and connecting with their community.
- Some members provide transport to and from walks, medical appointments and occasionally shopping or provide home cooked meals.
- Our members also make a phone call or send a card to check on the welfare of peers who may be struggling.
- We wrapped our arms around and supported those who lost partners, family members and friends.

Social Connection to the Community

This is an essential aspect of peer support. During the year Ballarat members have participated in a wide range of activities.

- Dinners and lunches each month to celebrate those having birthdays.
- Occasional afternoon and morning teas - just for fun and companionship.
- Viewing films at the cinema, often followed by lunch.
- Attending shows as a group at the Wendouree Performing Arts Centre, in Civic Hall, in Her Majesty Theatre and the Piano Bar.
- Christmas in July at Ballarat Golf Club.
- Christmas Dinner Gala in late November at The Grande Restaurant with 70 members present.
- Bus trips with the Ballarat City Council Ageing Well program.
- Five walkers sailed together on Disney Wonder cruise ship on a return trip from Melbourne to Hobart.





We use our Facebook page [Heartbeat Ballarat & Heartbeat Ballarat Walking Groups](#) to communicate information about our events and walks.

Heartbeat Ballarat & Heartbeat Ballarat Walking Groups would like to thank all its members for their support and participation in our walks, peer support and social connection throughout 2025. We wish all Heartbeat Victoria members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Fawkner Park Walking Group

The next walk of the Fawkner Park Walking Group has been tentatively set for Tuesday, January 20th. Once the date and time have been confirmed, details will be available via the Heartbeat Victoria website.

To register for the walk, please visit the Heart Foundation Walking page for the [Fawkner Park Walking Group](#).



Please send us your latest news for inclusion in the Autumn 2026 edition of Heartbeat Happenings which will be published in February 2026 (send to vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au by Friday February 6, 2026.