



Heartbeat Happenings

Winter 2023



Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

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BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President: Linda Macaulay

Secretary: Barry Nixon

Treasurer: Karen Saccuzzo

Assistant Treasurer: Tamieka Snowden

Board Members: Mark Braybrook; Robyn Fennell; Gail Newton; Christine Rees; 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.

In this issue

Welcome to Heartbeat Victoria's winter newsletter which this season includes:

Board Business

Looking forward to a new Strategic Plan

..... and a new website

Heart Health

Let's reduce the winter ills and build strong immunity

Heart to Heart

Christine Rees, the challenges of a diagnosis

What's Happening?

Ballarat

Bendigo

Bendigo Branch was also thrilled to receive \$1000 from CommBank's Community Donation Program. The funds will be used to support the Branch's donations to local hospitals for equipment to support their cardiac services.

The funding was based on votes, so Bendigo



Looking forward to a new Strategic Plan

The Board has started to develop a new three year Strategic Plan for Heartbeat Victoria.

A strategic plan defines an organisation's future direction and how it plans to get there, that is, who is HBVCI, what it wants to achieve and how it proposes to get there.

The key components of a strategic plan usually include:

- Purpose/Mission – The reason that the organisation exists, why it does what it does
- Vision – What the organisation aspires to, what it is hoping to achieve
- Values - Beliefs that guide the conduct, activities and goals of the organisation
- Priority areas or goals and objectives.

Heartbeat Victoria's Strategic Plan will be its commitment to its members, as well as supporting engagement with potential partners and funding providers.

Initial steps in the development of the Strategic Plan have included:

- Seeking the views of Board members on what they consider to be the purpose of Heartbeat Victoria, what they consider to be the strengths of the organisation, the key issues facing the organisation and what they consider should be the organisation's priorities over the next three years.
- Seeking information from Heartbeat Victoria's branches about their current membership, meetings and activities, their involvement in cardiac rehabilitation and fundraising activities, the issues currently affecting branches and how Heartbeat Victoria can best support its branches.

The next steps for the Board will be to assess the current situation, based on the information provided by Board members and branches, and to identify the mission/purpose, vision, values, priority areas and objectives for the Strategic Plan. Comments will then be invited from members and others interested on a draft Strategic Plan.

..... and a new website

The Board has appointed Goop Digital, a web design company based in Geelong, to redevelop the Heartbeat Victoria website so that it is a more valuable and upto date resource for people who have a heart condition or have had cardiac intervention and their families and carers, and which is easy to use and a resource that branches can readily use for their own promotion.

Work commenced on building the website in April and the new website is expected to go live in a few months' time.



Let's reduce the winter ills and build strong immunity

[Source: Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, 2021]

Immunisations are an effective way to protect against flu and covid. If you are unsure about having the immunisations, speak to your GP or health professional.

Remember, immunisations are just one of a number of ways to help strengthen your immunity.

Healthy ways to strengthen your immune system

Your first line of defence is to choose a healthy lifestyle. Following general good-health guidelines is the single best step you can take toward naturally keeping your immune system working properly.

Every part of your body, including your immune system, functions better when protected from environmental assaults and bolstered by healthy-living strategies such as these:



Don't smoke



Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables



Exercise regularly



Maintain a healthy weight



If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation



Get adequate sleep



Take steps to avoid infection, such as washing your hands frequently and cooking meats thoroughly



Try to minimize stress



Keep current with all recommended vaccines. Vaccines prime your immune system to fight off infections before they take hold in your body.

**Get involved in the
health of your region**

ADVISORY COUNCIL APPLICATIONS OPEN
APPLICATIONS CLOSE 2 JUNE 2023



Murray Primary Health Network is seeking applications from those interested in joining its Goulburn Valley or North East Community Advisory Council.

Click [here](#) for further information. Applications close **Friday 2 June, 2023.**



Heart to Heart

featuring one member's heart health experience

Christine Rees, the challenges of a diagnosis

(Christine Rees is the newest Board member of Heartbeat Victoria)

My world and identity changed 18 years ago (February 2023) when a diagnosis of Muscular Dystrophy was handed to me. I was unaware what this would mean or how it would impact my life into the future.

6 months after that diagnosis and after a deal of investigation, Googling and discussion with my GP, a muscle biopsy came back conclusive and now I was looking for a Neurologist to treat me. Three months waiting for a Neurologist appointment still no solution but more tests and checks and a further diagnosis of cardiomyopathy and heart failure. It is fair to say my world was upside down.



My heart journey started with the introduction of a wonderful nurse who supported me and walked me through the testing, introduction of medications and eventually a rehabilitation that has stood me well to live my life. Only those who have travelled this path utterly understand the anxiety, struggle and personal cost of this journey and that is the reason I believe in Heartbeat.

18 years on and I believe the support, education and understanding I have received, should be for all and much of this can be delivered by others who have travelled this path. Since working with Safer Care Victoria I have met and interacted with many people living this life. It's not always up and then off. There are downs along the way, such as when I had a cardiac episode at home, went to hospital, received a defibrillator then returned home, frail and broken. The support I received from cardiac peers working at Safer Care was reassuring, and comforting. This is the care I want all cardiac challenged people to have; this is what I see as the challenge for Heartbeat Victoria.

After the diagnosis, my life changed but the things I enjoyed didn't. I found new ways to be active and enjoy the bush. Family and friends were wonderful but sharing the journey was difficult and I was not good at that this type of communication. My decision to join Heartbeat Victoria was centred around better communication skills for those challenged by heart disease and their families, and empowering

them to be more involved in their care and decision making.



The best advice I ever got was, "find a way to enjoy your life you only get one go at it."



Remember, take good friends on your journey and enjoy making new ones. Then stop a while and chew some grass or perhaps something healthy

So I can't walk so far but I can still get where I want to go and I have done the course to make it safe.

What's Happening

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

Ballarat

Medical students training in Ballarat are being encouraged to get out and become involved in local community groups to better understand living and working in regional areas.

Deakin University medical students are taking part in Heartbeat Ballarat walking groups.



The student volunteers try to walk at least once a month, when their university schedule and placements allow, and fellow students have also spoken at the group's monthly meetings.

[Source: Courier Ballarat 17 April 2023 – Michelle Smith]

Deakin University medical students Seda Cotak, Alicia Chan and Lauren Martin join Heartbeat walks coordinator Barry Nixon on one of the group's regular walks at Lake Wendouree. Picture by Lachlan Bence.

Bendigo



A High Tea for the King's Coronation on Saturday May 6 was a highlight of Bendigo's calendar of events this month.

Seventy members, family and friends attended the event at which the local girl guides provided invaluable assistance with setting up, serving and clearing up.





Bendigo Branch was also thrilled to receive \$1000 from CommBank's Community Donation Program. The funds will be used to support the Branch's donations to local hospitals for equipment to support their cardiac services.

The funding was based on votes, so Bendigo Branch greatly appreciated the support of the local community, family and friends.

Bendigo Branch Vice-President, Barbara Dellar and Treasure, Nola Ward receiving the funding support from representatives of CommBank in Bendigo

Goulburn Valley



At its April meeting, members of the Goulburn Valley Branch worked in groups to respond to the Heartbeat Victoria's questionnaire relating to the development of its new Strategic Plan.

In particular the members provided their responses to some key questions for Heartbeat members:

- What are the reasons that members give for

attending Heartbeat activities?

- What are the issues that are currently affecting your Branch and the way that it operates?
- Having regard to the purpose of your Branch and how it operates, what are some ways that Heartbeat Victoria could support your Branch?



The information gained from the responses to the questionnaire will be used by the Board to identify the key issues and opportunities for Heartbeat Victoria and to plan for the future of the organisation.



Sunraysia

Sunraysia branch has been holding its usual monthly meetings and monthly coffee mornings. They are very pleased to welcome two new members to the group, Farah and Margaret.

Sunraysia members at the March morning coffee (L to R) Bill, Patsy, Jeff (President), Elaine (Secretary), their baby grandson in pram, new member Margaret and Phil

Please send us your latest news for inclusion in the Spring 2023 edition of Heartbeat Happenings which will be published in March (please send to Vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au by no later than **Friday July 28, 2023**)