

# Supporting Hearts

A toolkit for heart support groups



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## Special CD-ROM feature in back pocket of Toolkit

The back packet of this Toolkit contains a CD-ROM with a letter to General Practice, a general poster and brochure design that you can customise to promote your group.

Simply load the CD-ROM into your computer, open the poster and brochure templates, fill in your local details in the panel provided and print out copies as required.

# Introduction to *Supporting Hearts Toolkit*



Diana Heggie  
Chief Executive Officer  
Heart Foundation Victoria

This *Supporting Hearts Toolkit* has been developed for you and with you. Through guidance from a project working group that included representatives from the Heart Foundation, members of heart support groups and cardiac rehabilitation coordinators, together we developed this toolkit specifically with your needs in mind.

In 2013 we surveyed heart related peer support groups across Victoria. You told us that as a volunteer-run organisation you need help to be connected, resourced and promoted and that the Heart Foundation could play a key role in helping you promote and maintain your services, grow in membership and forge new links within your communities.

Since 1959, the Heart Foundation has been leading the way in improving heart health and preventing premature death from cardiovascular disease. As a charity, the Heart Foundation works with the trust and generous support of the community to help all Australians live healthier lives.

We are committed to helping people get back on track after they have experienced a heart event and are working to link people to the support they need when they most need it. We know that people who have little or no support after a heart attack have a higher risk of being readmitted to hospital and are less likely to make the lifestyle changes needed to keep their hearts healthy.

After a heart attack or being diagnosed with a heart condition, people need help to adjust to a new way of life that includes watching what they eat, taking daily medications and scheduling regular exercise. The social and emotional support offered by family and friends, many say, is crucial to this adjustment.

Additionally, many people have told us that just as vital for recovery, was connection with someone who had been through a similar experience, who could offer hope, coping strategies and reassurance about the future.

We know that support groups such as yours offer an invaluable level of assistance that can only be provided by people who have experienced the trauma of a heart event and know what it takes to get through it.

We hope the information, tips and stories here will be of value to you and help make the enormous job of running a community-run support group a little easier.

Your work is making a great difference to people's lives.

Diana Heggie

# The facts about heart disease and heart attack

## Heart disease

Heart disease is Australia's leading single cause of death with more than 21,513 Australian lives lost to the disease in 2011.

Heart disease affects around 1.4 million Australians.

In 2011, heart disease was responsible for the death of 59 Australians each day, or one every 24 minutes.

Heart disease is the number one killer of Australian women, with women almost three times more likely to die of it than breast cancer.

## Heart attack

- Each year, around 55,000 Australians suffer a heart attack. This equates to one heart attack every 10 minutes.
- Heart attack claimed 9,811 lives in 2011 or about 27 lives each day.
- Every day, 98 Australian men have a heart attack. One in seven of these men will die.
- It is estimated over 380,000 Australians have had a heart attack at some time in their lives.

## The risk factors

Although the figures are alarming, the good news is that heart disease is largely preventable. There is no single cause for heart disease but there are risk factors that increase your chance of developing it.

The **non-modifiable risk factors** (those you can't change) are:

- Increasing age
- Having a family history of heart disease.

The **modifiable risk factors** (those you can do something about) are:

- Smoking
- High blood cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Having diabetes
- Being physically active
- Being overweight
- Having depression, feeling socially isolated or lacking quality support.

Source: Heart Foundation [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)





It is always a good idea especially if you are over 45 years old, to talk to your doctor about having a heart health check to assess your risk of heart disease or heart attack.

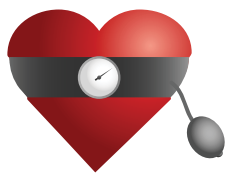
### Heart Foundation resources

The Heart Foundation has produced a number of resources with practical ideas for eating more healthily, weight management, quitting smoking, controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol, physical activity suggestions and much more. For information on any of the Heart Foundation's resources call the Heart Health Information Service during business hours on 1300 36 27 87 for the cost of a local call.

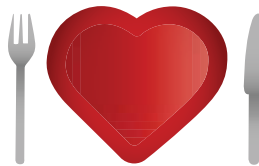
To view available Heart Foundation resources visit [www.heartfoundation.org.au/publications](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/publications)



**Free health information within reach**  
– The Heart Foundation's  
Health Information Service



Worried about  
high blood pressure or  
cholesterol levels?



Looking to lead a  
healthy lifestyle through  
nutrition, exercise and  
physical activity.



Our qualified health  
professionals are looking  
out for your health and  
wellbeing.



For information and  
support call us, email us  
or visit our website.

Whether you have an existing condition you'd like to discuss or would like some information on how to keep your heart in good shape, we'd love to hear from you!

Contact the Heart Foundation's Health Information Service for free\* personalised information on heart health, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Call **1300 36 27 87** during business hours, email **[health@heartfoundation.org.au](mailto:health@heartfoundation.org.au)** or visit **[www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthinfo](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthinfo)**



If you need an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask them to telephone the Heart Foundation's Health Information Service.

**Give a gift from the heart. Shop now at [heartfoundationshop.com](http://heartfoundationshop.com)**

\*cost of local call

# The role of peer support for people living with heart disease



## What is peer support?

Peer support occurs when people who are living with a long-term illness get together and share stories and experiences, and give each other empathetic, emotional and practical help.

The word 'peer' — which means 'one of equals' — is important. It differentiates this type of support from other rehabilitation services provided by professional health-based organisations. Peers are not health professionals or medical experts. They are volunteers who have been diagnosed with the same or a similar illness, and who are willing to share their time and experiences to offer hope, encouragement and a positive role model to others, especially the newly diagnosed. Peer support programs usually cater for people with the illness, but not always. Some programs include family and friends, while others are designed specifically for family and close friends, as in the case of carer support groups and programs.

*(Chronic Illness Alliance, Victoria).*

Peer support can be delivered in many ways: from structured support groups, telephone calls, via the internet, through home or hospital visits, going for walks together, having regular coffees or dinners to informal catch ups. What they all have in common is an opportunity to share experiences in an environment that is friendly and supportive.

## Benefits of belonging to a peer support group

For a person living with heart disease or recovering from a heart event, becoming a member of a support group can have many benefits. Being part of a support group can:

**Help you feel less alone** – spending time with people who have experienced what you are experiencing can help you feel less fearful, more hopeful, supported and accepted.

**Help you feel more motivated** – many people struggle to maintain the lifestyle changes needed to keep their heart healthy and avoid a second heart event. Being with people who have also had to make these changes and who have survived for years after a heart attack can be motivating and it's reassuring to know the effort has its rewards. Being part of a support group may also motivate you to connect in other ways such as through a walking group, exercise group or club such as bowls or golf for example.



**Help you feel more in control and informed** – sharing experiences and success stories can help you feel more informed about your condition and provide you with valuable links to other health professionals and community programs you may need during your recovery. Many support groups also have regular guest speakers who provide up to date information on heart related treatments and research.

**Help you feel a sense of belonging and community connection** – social connection and support from friends and family is important in the recovery from heart attack or when diagnosed with a heart condition. Joining a new group of people opens up the potential to make new friends and forge new connections to your community in many ways. You may even decide to become an active volunteer for your group and join in fundraising, promotion or educational activities connecting you to people and opportunities that you may not have experienced before. Feeling that you ‘belong’ and are connected to others is beneficial to your physical and emotional health.



## Peer support groups: what you need to know

If you are interested in starting up a support group there are two main ways you can do this: set up one yourself or join an existing heart related peer support network.

Support groups come in many forms; some will have a more formal structure than others and feature regular fundraising, social and educational activities while others may be happy to meet for social connection and activities only.

If you are interested in starting up a support group there are two main ways you can do this: set up one yourself or join an existing heart related peer support network.

### Setting up a group

If you decide to set up your own support group there are a number of things you need to consider. You will need to decide basic issues such as the purpose of your group, who your membership will be, where and how frequently you will meet, and what activities you will do as a group.

You may decide to set up an informal group where you meet up for a morning coffee and chat with people you met during cardiac rehabilitation for example. A good first step in setting up an informal group could be through your cardiac rehabilitation coordinator who may be able to help you identify like-minded people who would like to stay connected.

If you decide to set up a more formal group it can at times be like running a business. There are a number of administration issues that need to be addressed to ensure the group complies with any legal or governance issues such as those associated with operating a bank account, fundraising and volunteering. If you decide to become an incorporated association, you will need to understand what this means legally especially in relation to the requirements set out in the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 Model Rules for an Incorporated Association. You can find more information about this from Consumer Affairs Victoria.

The following information is designed to be a guide only. If you decide to start a group, it is recommended that a representative of the group seeks financial or legal advice regarding the requirements of running a peer support group.

### What does 'Not For Profit' mean?

Not For Profits are organisations that exist to benefit their members. This means that a Not For Profit can actually make a profit but is required to re-invest profits into the organisation or use them to pay for activities and functions.

## Do you need to be incorporated?

If you want to set up your support group as a Not For Profit organisation you are not legally required to become incorporated. A Not For Profit organisation can exist simply as a group of people with a common interest and a common purpose. The implications of becoming an incorporated association are outlined in Table 1 on Page 11. The table outlines the key issues you will need to consider should your group decides to become an incorporated association.

## Registering as a charity

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) is the independent national regulator of charities. Registration as a charity is voluntary. However, your organisation must be registered with the ACNC before it can receive any charity tax concessions from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and to be eligible for other Commonwealth concessions, benefits or exemptions available to charities. *If your organisation was endorsed as a charity by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) on 3 December 2012, it will be automatically registered with the ACNC.*

## Forming a committee

The key ingredient of a successful group is the willingness of members to step up and take on responsibilities that are essential to its smooth running and sustainability. There are several roles that are essential to this including:

Chairperson/President	Primary responsibility is to run the meetings. Depending on the skills and enthusiasm of the person this position is often one that can become the public figurehead for the group - may speak to the media and look for sponsorship opportunities.
Secretary	The secretary is often the life force in the group. Will often do a lot of the heavy-lifting in relation to the paperwork required for administration and governance, take minutes, facilitate events, fundraising and promotion of the group.
Treasurer	The treasurer is responsible for keeping the books, managing incoming monies from fundraising, memberships, sponsorships, grants and for paying the bills.
Membership Officer	Looks after the membership database.
Publicity Officer	This person will promote the group through flyers, newsletters, a website and contact the media through media releases and phone calls.



## Keeping financial records

Your group may want to raise money and accept donations. If people request a tax-deductible receipt, your group may need to be registered as a deductible gift receipt with the Australian Taxation Office.

## Australian Business Number

You might want to register for an Australian Business Number (ABN). Registering for an ABN is not a requirement, but you might need one when applying for grants or funding. Applying for an ABN is free and can be done online at [www.abr.gov.au](http://www.abr.gov.au) or call 13 28 66 and ask for an application form to be posted to you.

## Insurance

Your support group might need insurance, depending on your legal status, where you meet and if you are affiliated with other organisations such as a hospital. Types of insurance include: public liability, personal accident, Association liability insurance, Volunteers insurance and insurance through affiliated associations. You should consult an insurance broker or solicitor for more information. The Victorian Government's Not for Profit Compliance Support Centre has more information on this topic. Go to [www.nfpcompliance.vic.gov.au](http://www.nfpcompliance.vic.gov.au)

## Public liability insurance

Public liability insurance is necessary for an organisation to protect against the need to pay compensation to a person who is injured or suffers property damage or loss through a mistake or accident. For example, it is likely to cover a person who enters your premises and slips due to a wet surface and sustains a serious injury. You might require public liability insurance even if you meet in a place with its own insurance policy, such as a hospital or community council. It is recommended that you clarify this with the venue where you will be holding your meetings.

## Working with volunteers

Community groups run by volunteers can encounter a number of challenges. Victoria's Volunteering Portal is an online community information resource for organisations that are run by volunteers. The portal contains a large number of helpful tools, resources and information to help you manage, promote and run your group.

You can find the Victoria Volunteering Portal at [www.volunteer.vic.gov.au](http://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au)



**Table 1 Should your club become an incorporated association?**

Things to consider	If you incorporate	If you do not incorporate
Membership	Your organisation must have at least five members.	Your organisation can have any number of members.
Not-for-profit status	Your organisation may trade, but not in order to distribute profit to its members.	Your organisation is not restricted from trading or doing business for personal profit.
Legal status	Your organisation becomes a 'legal person' (that is, a legal entity that stays the same even if its members change). It can do the following things in its own name: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept gifts or bequests</li> <li>• buy and sell property</li> <li>• invest and borrow money</li> <li>• open a bank account</li> <li>• sue and be sued</li> <li>• take out public liability insurance with greater ease.</li> </ul>	Your organisation cannot do any of the things described under 'if you incorporate', at left. These would have to be done by an individual member on behalf of the unincorporated association's members. A member of an unincorporated association is usually personally liable for contracts they enter into and decisions they make.
Legal protection for members	Members and office bearers are protected against personal liability for the organisation's debts.	Members could be personally liable if the organisation incurs debts or has legal problems.
Statutory obligations	Your organisation and its office bearers must comply with requirements in the <i>Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012</i> , including accounting, auditing and annual reporting requirements.	Your organisation is not bound by the <i>Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012</i> . However, your organisation is still bound by other state and federal laws, such as tax laws.
Costs	Your organisation must pay fees for incorporating and lodging some administrative forms. There may also be costs involved in meeting ongoing statutory obligations, such as financial reporting.	Your organisation will not have the expense of meeting statutory obligations of incorporation.
Disputes	Your organisation must either have its own procedure for resolving internal disputes, or use the procedure in the model rules for incorporated associations.	Your organisation is not required to have or use a dispute resolution procedure.
Contracts and agreements	Your organisation can enter into contracts and agreements in its own name. This offers more certainty to potential contracting parties such as lenders, lessors, employees and suppliers of goods and services.	Your organisation cannot enter into contracts or agreements in its own name.
Grants	Your organisation may be eligible to apply for a larger range of government and non-government grants.	Your organisation will not be able to apply for grants that require applicants to be incorporated.
Name	Incorporated associations must include 'Incorporated' or 'Inc.' at the end of the name. All bank accounts, agreements are in the groups name.	No requirements regarding the name of the organisation.
Annual General Meeting	Must hold an Annual General Meeting.	Not required to host an Annual General Meeting.

This information has been sourced from Consumer Affairs Victoria at [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)





## Joining an existing peer support group or network

Another way to set up a support group is to connect with an existing organisation that has already done all the ground work required to operate as a not for profit organisation and whose mission and objectives align with what you would like to do. There are considerable benefits in joining an existing umbrella organisation or network including opportunities for insurance coverage, access to shared resources, existing policies and practices, guidance and advice regarding the set up and operation of a group and access to a large number of like-minded people who have a shared experience.

A number of peer-led heart support group networks currently operate in Victoria, established to provide assistance to people and their carers living with a specific heart condition or to those who have survived a heart event. These include:

### Heartbeat Victoria Inc

Heartbeat Victoria Inc. is a voluntary organisation supporting several branches and affiliates across Victoria. Membership is open to people living with heart disease, their relatives and friends. Established in 1984 in 'appreciation of patients being given a second chance', members all share a desire to contribute positively toward the support and assistance of other heart patients and carers.

The organisation actively promotes friendship and the sharing of information through regular meetings and social events, raises funds for cardiac units to provide additional equipment and services, and provides support and reassurance to people and their families when corrective surgery is necessary.

**For more information phone 0427 241 724.**

### Heart Support – Australia Limited (HS-A)

Heart Support-Australia (HS-A) was initially established as the Australian Cardiac Association in 1986 to address the needs of people with a heart condition and their carers by assisting them find support, information and encouragement. The organisation believes that people are often given prescriptive advice on how to live for the first six weeks post a cardiac event but not beyond. It is also aware that the need for information and support is often greater in rural areas and for those living alone.

A key feature of the organisation is a free Heart Health Support Service run by trained volunteers, with the service usually offering a 'listening ear'. The organisation also aims to help patients and their carers self manage their condition. Volunteers also work in a variety of settings such as hospital wards, patients' homes, health centres, over the telephone and in any appropriate environment that is convenient for the patient.

There are some branches in Victoria with each running its own local events and services. The Albury-Wodonga branch is particularly active with regular fundraising activities to assist cardiac rehabilitation in the local hospitals, social events and walking groups.

**For more information go to [www.heartnet.org.au](http://www.heartnet.org.au)**

## Cardiomyopathy Australia

Cardiomyopathy Australia is a national support network for people living with Cardiomyopathy, their family and friends. Established in the 1990s, it aims to provide social connection, current information, increase public awareness and foster medical research.

The organisation does not have branches as such throughout each state, but instead provides a central state coordinator. Members receive an information kit and are linked to members who are happy to share experiences and provide support.

Quarterly meetings held in Victoria feature a guest speaker, with presentations frequently taped and loaned to members on request. Members receive a quarterly newsletter containing the latest information, members' stories and committee reports.

**For more information go to [www.cmaa.org.au](http://www.cmaa.org.au)**



## Hearts4Heart

Hearts4Heart was set up to provide support for young cardiac patients, their families and friends. The organisation provides one on one support, online forums and virtual communities, education and information on heart disease. Hearts4Heart also provides assistance to adolescents as they transition into adult hospitals.

Key aims of the organisation are to increase awareness of the issues young people face living with a heart condition and help young people connect with each other to decrease feelings of isolation and anxiety.

For more information go to [www.hearts4heart.org.au](http://www.hearts4heart.org.au)

## Other heart support groups

Other heart support groups also exist that are not connected to a bigger network of groups. These groups tend to have a more social and fellowship focus. Often they have a link to the local hospital or community health service, so this may be a good first step in connecting with them.

## CASE STUDY

### Supporting hearts and minds in Warrnambool

A heart support group based in Warrnambool is a positive example of a group of committed ex-cardiac patients who have continued to offer support and connection for locals, in spite of changing circumstances.

Originally called The Zipper Club, the group became a branch of Heart Support-Australia in 1997. In 2012, the group dissolved from Heart Support-Australia and became an independent body and was renamed Warrnambool Zipper Health Support Network Incorporated. With a healthy membership they met monthly with a guest speaker, held celebratory dinners, visited both public and private hospital rehabilitation programs and had trained counsellors on hand to offer support to anyone in need.

The group also belonged to a local combined health support group that included other chronic conditions such as Arthritis and Parkinson's disease.

In 2013, with an ageing membership, the group found it was no longer able to fill office bearer positions and decided to forego its incorporated status. Keen to continue with the fellowship and friendships formed over many years, the group voted to meet monthly for lunch and social connection.

# Promoting your group through your local community

There are many ways to get the word out that your group exists and that you welcome enquiries and new members. The most popular ways to do this is through brochures, posters and flyers at targeted locations and services and via the media. Another effective strategy is a tailored letter of introduction to health professionals such as GPs, community nurses and cardiac rehabilitation providers.

## Targeted locations and services

To get your groups promotional resources out to the people you want to reach, you will need to identify locations and services within your community that your desired audience has contact with.

Locations could include:

## Hospitals

**Cardiac rehabilitation programs** - Many support groups develop strong relationships with the cardiac rehabilitation providers at their local hospital. This is especially common for those groups that are comprised of ex-cardiac patients of the hospital. A popular strategy employed by many groups is for a member to visit each cardiac rehabilitation program cycle (usually every 6 – 8 weeks) and promote their services. This is a great way to let people know that community support is available once the rehabilitation phase is completed. It is also a very effective way to help members feel valued and highlights the importance of the work being done by the support group.

Cardiac rehabilitation coordinators recognise the value of peer support and are usually welcoming of the opportunity to link people to ongoing support when they complete cardiac rehabilitation.

**Locations of cardiac rehabilitation programs can be found at <http://www.acra.net.au/>**

## Hospital Admissions Risk Program – HARP

A number of hospitals also run HARP services which cater to people with a chronic disease or complex needs that frequently present to hospital or are at risk of doing so. This service includes people living with chronic heart disease. HARP health practitioners can include heart failure nurses, social workers and physiotherapists.

You can check if your area has a HARP service on the Department of Health website at [www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)





## Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres can be great locations to promote your group's activities.

There may be an area where brochures, flyers or posters can be displayed, but please ask permission to do so.

As a community hub, many people attend the centre so you are assured of a large number of people being exposed to your materials. Many centres run cardiac rehabilitation programs and are often a meeting place for support groups for chronic illnesses and exercise groups. You could also directly contact health professionals on site such as community health nurses, social workers, physiotherapists and nutritionists to let them know of your activities. They may also be able to offer you practical support in linking your group to established programs they run such as those for people with chronic illness or for people who are socially isolated.

## General Practices

Your local General Practice is an ideal location to promote your group. Start by sending a letter of introduction to the Practice Manager (See sample letter on page 17).

Make sure to ring first to find out who this is so you can personalise the letter. In the letter explain who you are, why you are contacting them and how your services could benefit their patients. Also attach a promotional brochure, flyer or poster and ask if the materials could be displayed in the waiting room. It may be a good idea to use group's members who are patients of the practice to promote your activities as they will already have an established relationship with a GP, nurse or receptionist at the practice.

Some groups have received support from cardiologists and cardiac nurses who are happy to promote them. This is also an avenue you may want to explore. Have a chat to your cardiologist and the outpatients department of the hospital you visit; it never hurts to ask.



## Sample letter to General Practice

Date

Support group letterhead

Dear Dr Smith,

Re: Local support and information for people living with heart disease

We are writing to introduce our group, the Cherryvale Heart Support Group. We are a community-run peer support group formed by ex-cardiac patients with a view to providing support and information to people in the local area who have survived a cardiac event or who are living with heart disease.

As you know, surviving a heart attack can be a very traumatic and life-changing event for many people and their families. Physical and emotional support is needed to help people cope with the initial shock and to assist with the lifestyle changes need to prevent a further event. We know this too, as we have all been there. We also know that during recovery there is often the need to connect with someone who has been through a similar experience, who has coping strategies to share.

We have been running in Cherryvale for 25 years and have a very strong relationship with the Heart Foundation, the local hospital and community health centre. The group meets monthly to provide information sessions on the latest treatments and research in heart health and to share stories and a meal together.

We welcome new members and would sincerely appreciate it if you could inform patients living with heart disease of our service and activities. Please find attached a copy of our brochure. We would love to be able to display a number of these in your waiting room. We will be in touch in the next week to confirm that this is possible.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to distribute this information about our group. We are committed to helping people living with heart disease in our community increase their quality of life through being better informed and socially connected.

We look further to future contact with your practice,

Yours sincerely,

Joy Spencer  
Secretary, Cherryvale Heart Support Group



Another avenue is to contact your local councillors and let them know all about you.

## Local council

Each local council has a website that contains information about the council's areas of work, local events and activities. Some welcome community organisations to submit their activities on the events section on the website.

Positions within local government differ between councils, so if you would like to introduce your group to local workers, the areas you could look to make contact with include:

- Community services and development
- Community development and support
- Aged care programs
- Positive ageing team
- Senior citizens

Many councils also run activities associated with Seniors Festivals and Health Days/Expos/Galas. There may be an opportunity for your group to participate in these events or at least distribute promotional materials.

If a website seems hard to navigate, call the main contact number and let them know the area you are looking for and ask if they could connect you to the right person to have a chat about your group.

Another avenue is to contact your local councillors and let them know all about you. You may be able to get a councillor on board to become a champion of your organisation and promote you more widely within the council and the community.

Other local places for promotional materials:

- Neighbourhood houses
- Libraries
- Service clubs such as Lions, Probus, Rotary
- Churches
- Sporting clubs such as golf, bowls, football
- Men's Sheds
- Walking groups
- Community exercising groups
- Leisure Centres

## Chronic illness support groups

It is common for people to live with one or more chronic illnesses as they age. There may be support groups in your area for other conditions such as cancer, arthritis or diabetes that may also have members living with heart disease. It may be valuable to connect with each other and share resources such as guest speakers, meeting rooms, local contacts and health resources for example.

## CASE STUDY

### The beating heart of Bendigo

Heartbeat Bendigo's relationship with local hospital, St John of God, is an inspiring example of the benefits of a union based on mutual respect and reciprocity.

Two to three times a week, for two to three hours each time, members of the Heartbeat Bendigo branch volunteer to assist with the hospital's cardiac rehabilitation program. Volunteers are given specific tasks and are essentially extra eyes and hands for the cardiac rehabilitation coordinator. The volunteers are part of a roster system so no-one has to commit every week and participants can still have time off for holidays.

"Heartbeat's contribution to our rehab program is immeasurable. Their unpaid work is a massive contribution to the hospital. The volunteers undertake several tasks including introducing the patients to each other, setting up the rooms and exercise equipment and taking the participants' pulses three times during the exercise sessions", cardiac rehabilitation coordinator, Carmel Bourne said.

Additionally, every five weeks a member of the support group presents to the rehabilitation group and explains who they are, what they offer and how patients can access extra support in the community once they complete their rehabilitation program. As ex-cardiac patients, Heartbeat Bendigo members also fundraise for the hospital specifically to buy equipment for the cardiac wards.

Dawn Bateman, long-serving secretary of Heartbeat Bendigo, says the relationship with the hospital has proven to be a mutually positive one to both parties.

"The hospital has been incredibly supportive of us. Assisting with the rehab program allows us to meet many new people throughout the year and promote our group. Quite a few of them become members of Heartbeat after they finish. The reality is if we don't get memberships, the hospital won't get equipment. We need members to continue to raise funds for the hospital and to keep us going as an organisation".

St John of God is committed to ensuring their volunteers feel valued. A huge thank you Christmas lunch is held each year with gifts and special recognition of people who have put in long years of service. The value of peer support for people living with heart disease is also well recognised by the hospital.

"Heartbeat's value goes beyond fundraising for us. They are incredibly important as a place for people to go in the community after rehabilitation. Some people after a heart event really need someone to say hello to and have a cup of coffee with. Someone who knows what they are going through. I think it is really important for cardiac rehabilitation coordinators to link with local groups such as Heartbeat and walking groups to give people options for further support", Carmel added.

For hospitals without links to peer support groups, Carmel suggests cardiac rehab program coordinators tap into existing volunteer groups within the hospital to source people to help out. Many volunteers may also be ex-cardiac patients and may either want to help out in the program or perhaps begin a support group of their own.

For Dawn, now a member for fifteen years, volunteering with the group is the best way she can think of to spend her time.

"Volunteering at the hospital is a great way to get out of the house! It is not hard – anyone of any age can do it and you get a great feeling of pleasure helping people. The hospital also makes us feel really valued. After helping out for a long time now, you can walk down the street and recognise people you have met through the hospital. It is a great way to feel a real sense of belonging in the community", Dawn said.

# Promoting your group through media



A media release is the best way to engage the media.

## Engaging local media

The local media, particularly the local newspaper is a great way to promote your group as they are always looking for local stories and photos to fill their pages.

The local paper can be used to:

- Publicise an event
- Promote your group to attract new members
- Announce an achievement, an award, special milestone, the release of a new report or new research
- Advocate – that is, to lobby for funding or for increased services or to promote a position or policy.

## Tools

### A media release

A media release is the best way to engage the media. It is not an advertisement; it is a way of communicating something about you to the media. It is the standard tool used by all media officers and communications departments to get information to media outlets.

### The media release rules

It is very important that you follow the standard rules for writing a media release. Most editors will look at it for ten seconds and decide if it is newsworthy or not. This is your chance to make an impression.

Before you write the release think about what messages you are trying to convey. What is your story? Who do you want to communicate with and why? Why are you going to the local paper?

To make your media release stand out you need to make it newsworthy. An event is not news. Papers love good human interest stories. A quirky story is even better. Identify an interesting person within your group to tell their story. It could be a heart attack survivor promoting the warning signs of a heart attack or recommending people go to their GP to have a heart check. It could be a milestone that your group is celebrating or a story that links your group to something happening at the hospital or health service.

Decide on some key messages such as the warning signs of a heart attack or that treatment for a heart attack is not a cure and that you are not fixed. Perhaps you could highlight the risk of having another heart attack if you don't make lifestyle changes.

You can also ask high profile people from your community to support your work and key messages. Ask if they would be available for interviews, quotes, photo opportunities. Include people such as, politicians, sportspeople, councillors, business leaders, advocacy groups, health agencies etc.

Always think of ways to make the story more interesting – think of visuals that would appeal to a photographer. Arrange activities, an announcement or story with a special time such as Heart Foundation Door Knock Appeal, World Health Day, Seniors Week, National Volunteers Week, Carers' Week, Men's Health Week or Heart Week. You can find the dates of these events by searching for them on the internet.

### Writing the media release

- Write the most important information first – this is called the “inverted pyramid”. Put the most important information in the first two paragraphs.
- Cover the essentials – Who, What, Where, Why, When and How.
- Keep it short – if possible aim for one A4 page. Use simple sentences, not flowery language and stick to the facts. Keep sentences to 15 words and paragraphs to four or five lines.
- Include quotes from a spokesperson in the organisation or a high profile person who supports you.
- Provide statistics if possible. For example, you can quote Heart Foundation statistics citing the number of heart attacks in Victoria in the last year or even use local statistics showing figures relevant to your area.
- Use a catchy but not corny headline.
- Write “Media Release” at the top of the page on your group's letterhead if available. Also include “For Immediate Release” on the top of the page.
- Supply contact details of people available for follow-up information and quotes. Include after hours information and only choose someone who is available to the media at all times. Also highlight that you have photos available or that there will be opportunities for photographs to be taken to accompany the story.
- Always double check dates, phone numbers and addresses.
- Always spell and grammar check.





### Sending the media release

Identify a health journalist or a main journalist in the local paper and email directly to them. If you have trouble finding a specific journalist, email directly to the editor. You will find contact details in the local paper or on their website.

You can even go directly in to the newspaper office and introduce yourself and hand over the media release.

Tuesday is the best day to email the media release as papers are often looking at the next editions from this day on. Email the release two weeks in advance. Follow up with a phone call on the same day to introduce yourself, ask if they received the email and ask if they would like to meet for a chat.

If the paper doesn't get back to you – ring them again a few days later. You should also send the media release again closer to the event date inviting them along and highlighting any interview and photograph opportunities. Make sure you hold an event in a bright interesting place to get people's attention.

If there is no media interest before the event or on the day, don't feel disheartened. Your request will be one of many and the paper will prioritise according to available resources and what they see as being the most interesting at the time to their readers. If you like you can send another media release after the event with details of how many people attended, highlights and successes, quotes from VIPs etc. Don't send a photo unless it is of professional quality.

## Sample media release

### MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday 20 November 2013

Local councillor gives back after getting a second chance at life

Heart Foundation statistics reveal that every ten minutes someone in Australia is suffering a heart attack. This time last year, Cherryvale councillor Harry Stevens became the human face of those statistics.

"I had no idea what was happening to me. I had the sweats something shocking, was dizzy and had a pain in my left arm that was also in my jaw. My wife said she had seen an ad about the warning signs of a heart attack and called an ambulance. Lucky she did as unbeknown to me, I was a ticking time bomb!".

Harry had triple bypass surgery and had to make serious changes to his lifestyle.

"Like a lot of men, I thought I was invincible. I gave up smoking a few years back, but I ate a lot of rubbish on the run, did no exercise and was definitely working way too many hours. I hadn't seen my GP for years and had no idea that my cholesterol levels were through the roof!"

Surviving a life threatening event however took its toll on Harry, who started to feel very anxious and quite alone, six months after his surgery. Getting in touch with the Cherryvale Heart Support Group helped him get back on track and increased his motivation to keep eating healthily, exercising regularly and taking his medications daily. Harry is now a committee member with the group and is keen to help others in his situation.

Cherryvale Hospital cardiac rehabilitation coordinator, Lisa Greene, said people like Harry need ongoing support throughout their recovery.

"After a rehabilitation program, people are left with no follow up or support. That's why support groups are invaluable as they help people stay connected and assist them when they are most vulnerable. For people who don't attend cardiac rehab, their future can be grim without community support".

The Cherryvale Heart Support Group is made up of ex-cardiac patients and their carers who meet monthly to offer support and share information. They also fundraise for the local hospital cardiac ward in appreciation of its lifesaving work, with new members always welcome.

Next Sunday, the group in partnership with the Cherryvale Hospital, will hold a giant family picnic on the hospital grounds to coincide with Heart Week. Entertainment will be provided by local band The Defibrillators with appearances during the afternoon from local health professionals, including cardiologists and cardiac rehabilitation nurses to provide more heart health information.

All proceeds will go to the local hospital cardiac ward.

For more information about the event contact Harry Stevens on 0307 333777

For information about the Cherryvale Heart Support Group contact Joy Spencer on 03 57 777 777

Available for interview on the day:

Harry Stevens – Cherryvale Heart Support Group

Dr Chris Harris – Cardiologist Cherryvale Health

Lisa Greene – Clinical Nurse Consultant Cardiac Rehabilitation Cherryvale Health

Ends

## Community listings.

Newspapers often have community listing sections. It is a good idea to also email details of your event to this section of the paper. Local councils may have event listings on their websites and invite people to submit their details.

You can use the information below to promote your group in a number of ways. For example you can use all of the information in one block and send to the newspaper or shorten it and just use two or three paragraphs to be included in the *What's On* section.

### Sample promotion for community listings, health professionals, and newsletters.

#### The Cherryvale Heart Support Group

Are you recovering from a heart attack or living with heart disease?

Would you like to be with local people who know what you are going through and would love to offer you hope and encouragement?

Would you like to hear more about heart disease and how to keep on track with life after a heart attack?

The Cherryvale Heart Support Group is a group of local ex-cardiac patients and their carers who meet monthly to have a chat, share stories and learn more about heart disease and related treatments and research from guest speakers. Special social events are also held every second month.

Where: Last Tuesday of the month (except December)

Where: Cherryvale Community Health Centre,  
100 Main St, Cherryvale

Time: 10.30am – 12.30pm

Cost: \$2 donation to cover the cost of morning tea

New members are always welcome. Please feel free to attend anytime. If you would like further information about the group or would just like to have a chat with someone who understands what it is like to live with heart disease, please contact Joy Spencer on 03 57 777 777



## Television and radio

You can also send your media release or community listing information to local television and radio stations. It is much more difficult to get interest from a television station, but if the station has a local news program you can target your information to attract them. If you are holding an event for example, you are much more likely to get interest if it is held in an interesting location, has a quirky appeal to a large audience or involves a celebrity or well known local person.

Give as much notice as possible. Send a media release through a week before your event – then follow up with another reminder a couple of days before the event. On the day of the event, call to ensure journalists have the information they need (they may even decide to do a story before the event to show at another time). Don't be too disappointed if they tell you they are coming and they either change their mind or don't show up. TV news tends to follow what's in the papers so if there are any big, breaking stories they will put their resources into that story rather than your event.

For local or community radio stations, there is always the opportunity that your community listing information may be read out when there are breaks in programs or if there is a community announcements section in the program.

As with all media, you never know if your story will get picked up or appeal on that particular news day. But if you have spokespeople who are articulate, are available when the media calls any time of the day, and you have key messages that you can get across in an interview, it never hurts to send in your details and see what happens. At least your organisation's name and purpose will have received some internal exposure within the media organisation and next time you send in another media release or community announcement you may be remembered. As local television stations will often follow up on stories that appear in the newspaper concentrating on getting a story in the newspaper first is a good use of your group's time and resources.



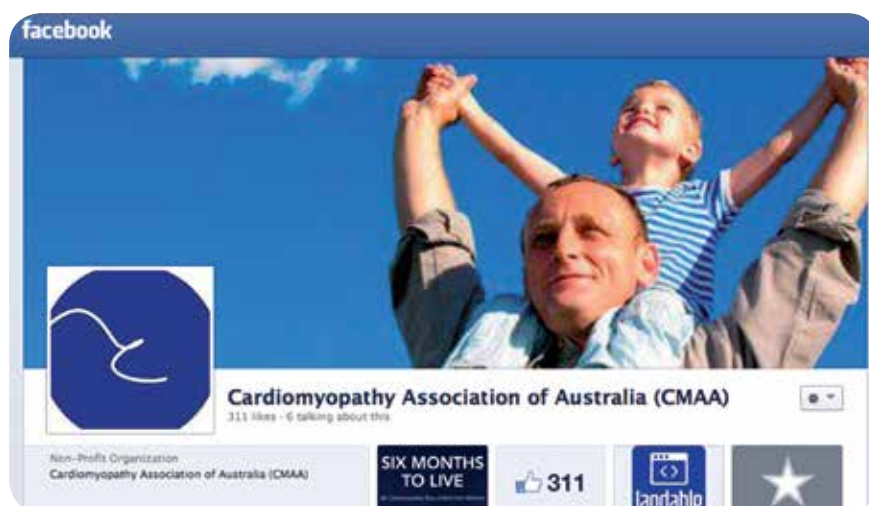
## Website and social media

Many groups use a website or Facebook page to promote themselves generally, attract new members or keep existing members up to date with events and items of interest. You may want to have your own website, but could be put off by the perceived cost of establishing a website or by the actual task itself.

Someone in your group, their children or grandchildren may have experience and skills in setting up basic webpages or a Facebook page. If so, this would be a great, cost-effective opportunity for your group. Alternatively, you could apply for funding for an external provider to develop your website, find a skilled corporate volunteer (see ideas for other funding sources in the section *Show me the money – opportunities to keep your group afloat*) or explore free community web hosting opportunities.

If you do decide to manage a website and/or Facebook page you will need a dedicated member to update and moderate the sites on a regular basis.

Having an online presence is an effective way to promote your group to a very wide audience in a short time. See Case Study: Coming face to face with Cardiomyopathy.





## CASE STUDY

### Coming face to face with Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy is a disease of the heart muscle that can affect anyone at anytime. It is a condition, support organisation Cardiomyopathy Australia says, that has little exposure and is often poorly understood.

“Cardiomyopathy often gets lost as it doesn’t fall in the same category as heart attack and angina. As a condition, Cardiomyopathy is not well understood and there is often confusion about how to support people when they are diagnosed with the condition”, Joan Kerr, Victorian coordinator of Cardiomyopathy Australia said.

The group began in the early 1990s aiming to increase support and information for people diagnosed with the condition, raise general awareness and foster research in the area. With approximately 450 members nationally, the organisation spends considerable time supporting, comforting and providing up to date information for the newly diagnosed. Many are often distressed after resorting to researching the condition on the internet due to receiving inadequate information or support at diagnosis.

“I will often receive calls from people who are distraught as after doing their own research they believe they are about to drop dead”, Joan added. “We help them to understand that this need not be the case.”

Like most volunteer run support groups, Joan said the group has a lower profile than they would like and due to lack of funding, finds it difficult to get their message out as far and wide as possible. With this in mind, two years ago the group decided to try a new strategy, using social media, to reach newly diagnosed younger people by constructing a Facebook page.

“Young people are also diagnosed with Cardiomyopathy and many especially those aged in their teens and twenties, find this a massive blow. Many don’t want to know about the condition, they want to drink and party, play football and have fun”, Joan said.

Cardiomyopathy Australia was hoping the social media initiative would provide a forum for young people to connect with each other and share their experiences in an environment they were familiar and comfortable with.

Currently the Facebook page gets approximately 200 – 300 hits a week but most enquiries are from non members and from people older than the originally intended target group. The organisation believes young people think they are invincible with many in denial regarding their diagnosis and are therefore not engaging on the page in the way they had hoped.

Cardiomyopathy Australia sees their Facebook page as a way of boosting people’s sense of wellbeing, but is finding it challenging as it’s a disease that many people don’t know what to do with. Even though there are not a lot of young people chatting to each other as the organisation had hoped, it is still a good first port as people go to the page and ask a question. They are then provided with initial information and directed to the state coordinators for more information. It’s a great way for the organisation to promote the benefits of becoming a member.

Cardiomyopathy Australia can be found at [www.cmaa.org.au](http://www.cmaa.org.au)

# Tips to keep your group on track



## Creating a welcoming environment – how to turn interest into members

Often a support group exists with a small core of members and is not in the enviable position of having large membership numbers that will ensure its survival. Most groups need to attract new members on a regular basis and most importantly, retain those members.

Joining an established group can be a daunting experience for some people. Many may feel some anxiety initially when having face to face contact with strangers, and existing members may also feel some uncertainty about new people joining the group especially if the group has been running for a while.

Ask members of the group to share their stories.

Here are eight tips to help you create an environment to encourage interested people to keep coming back and ideally become active members:

1. Create an informal buddy system – allocate an existing member to have an informal chat to the person before they attend their first meeting. Find out a bit about them, especially why they are interested in joining a group and what their expectations are. Assure them that the key purpose of the group is for connection and support and that there are people there who know what they are going through. Make sure their buddy greets them when they arrive for their first meeting and looks out for them.
2. Ask members of the group to share their stories with the new person, to help put them at ease and show they are not alone. This may encourage the new person to share their story.
3. Put as much effort as you can into making each meeting interesting and informative. Ask members for ideas for guest speakers; topics don't always have to be medical or heart-related, any lifestyle related or local interest topic can be valuable in helping people during recovery. This can include guests who work in community health, welfare, sporting organisations, the arts, the media, local council, service agencies such as Rotary and organisations such as Council on the Ageing (COTA).
4. Do some detective work with existing members – many may live very interesting lives, have skills, experiences and community links that they could share with the group.

5. Keep communication channels open - check in with members informally now and then, perhaps during a social event to see how satisfied they are with the workings of the group. Ask for feedback on past guest speakers, outings etc.
6. Celebrate milestones together such as birthdays, anniversaries and special local events. Some groups have a dinner or lunch each month and collectively celebrate members' birthdays that fall in that month. You may also choose to run a special event for Heart Week for example.
7. Produce a basic newsletter. A newsletter is mainly used to keep members in touch, share information about past and present meetings and promote the group to a wider audience. It is also a valuable tool in sharing good news stories about members, including birthdays, anniversaries, family events and holidays. Encourage members to contribute to the newsletter.
8. Keep in touch with people who have stopped attending meetings – perhaps through the newsletter or an informal phone call. You never know what their personal circumstances are and they may come back at a later date. Do give them the opportunity to opt out of further contact if they choose.

### Avoiding 'burn out' – encouraging members to share the load

Many volunteer-run groups find that no matter how large their membership base, it often falls on the same core group of people (often long-standing committee members) to do most of the work. Encouraging more members to take on specific tasks and share the load can be a challenging task but is crucial for the health and future of the group.

Strategies to help members avoid burn-out, encourage others to take on new responsibilities and increase morale include:

- Ask members about their skills and interests so they can be given tasks they enjoy and feel confident taking on.
- Appoint assistants to committee positions so the job does not become a burden and time-consuming for one person. This is also a good way of building someone's confidence and then transitioning them to take on more responsibility at a later time.
- Make sure work carried out by members is acknowledged and rewarded so they feel valued and want to continue being an active contributor.
- Appoint small teams to carry out larger tasks so the work doesn't fall on one person and, a collective sense of achievement is reached once completed.
- Schedule meetings and events at family-friendly times in easy to access locations to encourage greater attendance and participation.

Remember the purpose of the group is to offer support and connection – check in on members who seem to be carrying a heavy load of activities and encourage them to ask for help before they feel overwhelmed.

## CASE STUDY

### Offering support across the border

Ken and Rosemary Every know first-hand how traumatic and frightening a sudden heart attack can be. In 1991, a fit, healthy 37 year-old father of two young girls, Ken's heart attack came out of the blue and was shocking for the entire family.

"After the heart attack Ken had no support whatsoever. There was no cardiac rehabilitation back then. He was very emotional and started asking *Why me? How could this happen to me?*" Rosemary said.

Eighteen months later, Ken heard about Heart Support – Australia (HS-A) through a workmate. The organisation was initially established as the Australian Cardiac Association in 1986 to provide people living with a heart condition, support, information and encouragement.

Ken very quickly got involved with the local Albury/Wodonga branch and found helping others assisted his recovery and eased his sense of loneliness.

Other HS-A groups began referring younger men to Ken for support and wives with young children to Rosemary.

The Albury/Wodonga branch now provides a number of services and activities including a Heart Health Information Service where anyone can ring for the cost of a local call for support and a "listening ear".

"We have a number of fully trained volunteers who are also ready to offer support. We match people with others who have had a similar procedure or event and from their experience they can offer them valuable advice on how they recovered and how they coped", Rosemary said.

Rosemary believes people are often reluctant to pick up the phone and ask for help even when they really need it and would love more people to access this phone service.

The group also runs three walking groups; one walking inside the Lauren Jackson Sports Centre in Albury so the weather is never an issue and two very popular pole walking groups along the Murray River.



# Show me the money – opportunities to keep your group afloat

There are a number funding sources available to community groups. Most groups fundraise through raffles, event nights, dinners, fetes, trivia and movie nights. But there are other funding sources available to not for profit community organisations that support groups like yours could explore.

You may find members of your group have strong financial administration or writing skills which could be utilised to write grant submissions or sponsorship proposals.

## Government Grants

### Federal Government

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs offers Volunteer grants for community organisations across Australia. Chronic illness peer support groups have been successful in obtaining these grants. It is recommended that you check the website for details of funding rounds and application requirements.

Go to **[www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)** and then look for Grants and Funding.

### State Government

The Victorian Department of Health supports and promotes chronic illness peer support groups through its Health Condition Support Grants. The details of the funding rounds can be found at **[www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)** – search for Health Condition Support Grants.

## CASE STUDY

### Branching out to bring in the bucks

The Goulburn Valley branch of Heartbeat Victoria Inc. has been supporting people in the Shepparton surrounds since 1986. It has a great track record in proactively looking for and securing grants. In 2012 they received a Victorian Department of Health grant that provided funding to develop a new website, produce promotional pamphlets and a pull-up banner. Twelve months later they were successful in securing a Federal Government Volunteer Grant that has enabled them to purchase a computer, a laminator and a portable public address system.

“These grants have been of great benefit to us as a group and to our volunteers. For example, the computer benefits all of our committee members and the p.a. system is especially good for members at our meetings who are harder at hearing. You have to put a bit of time into writing the grants but it can be very rewarding”, Goulburn Valley Secretary Robyn Fennell said.





## Local Government

Many councils offer community grants for local organisations. Contact your local council for more information.

## Local Members of Parliament

Your local state and federal government members are also good sources of information regarding grants. Contact their offices and ask to be put on their mailing list so you receive updates of available grants when the office receives them. Additionally, support groups have developed relationships with their local members and received assistance through activities such as free printing and collation of monthly newsletters.

## Local sponsorships

Local businesses are well known for sponsoring sporting clubs, service clubs, local causes, community events and organisations. The personal and professional networks of your members are invaluable in checking out potential sponsorship opportunities.

Sponsorships can be one-off donations such as raffle prizes or large amounts that contribute greatly to the activities of your group. A sponsorship can also be an activity done for no cost such as printing or postage of newsletters, pro bono legal or accounting advice for example.

Before you approach a potential sponsor, be clear about what you are asking for and demonstrate the benefits the sponsor will gain from being associated with your group. Sponsors need to know up front what's in it for them. Make sure you highlight why the group exists, who the members are and how your group will reciprocate support to the sponsor.

Managing a sponsorship is the same as managing a relationship. It can take time to build trust and you must deliver to the sponsor what you said you would. Never underestimate the importance of generating goodwill and going the extra mile to make a sponsor feel valued and letting them know the significance of their contribution.

## Trusts and Foundations

There are several hundred Trusts and Foundations across Australia that fund specific projects and issues. A full list can be found by subscribing to the Australian Directory of Philanthropy at [www.philanthropy.org.au](http://www.philanthropy.org.au)

Some examples that may be relevant to your group:

***Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal – Small Grants for Small Communities.***

These grants are open to communities with populations of less than 10,000.

Go to [www.frrr.org.au](http://www.frrr.org.au)

***Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal – Caring for Ageing Rural Australians Program (CARA)***

These grants are for projects and activities that improve the wellbeing of older Australians through community based positive ageing projects.

Go to [www.frrr.org.au](http://www.frrr.org.au)

***Foundation 49 Men's Health Community Grants***

The aim of these grants is to improve the health of Australian men by increasing health awareness and encouraging regular check ups.

Go to [www.49.com.au](http://www.49.com.au)

***The Community Enterprise Foundation***

This group is the philanthropic arm of the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Group and offers grants for local communities to bring people together to achieve positive outcomes for their communities.

To see which community grants are available go to  
<https://applicationscommunityenterprisefoundation.com.au>

***Aussie Farmers Foundation Grant***

This grant supports initiatives that make a difference to the health and wellbeing of Australian rural and regional communities.

Go to [www.aussiefarmersfoundation.org.au](http://www.aussiefarmersfoundation.org.au)

## CASE STUDY

### Building community trust fosters support in Knox

Heartbeat Victoria Knox branch has a great track record in forming influential community partnerships to help keep it going. Set up in 1999, originally as a branch of Heart Support-Australia, the group has developed key relationships enabling it to produce, print and send out a monthly newsletter over several years for little cost.

The newsletter, once produced is printed by the local state government member's office. It is then delivered to the Knox Private Hospital cardiac rehabilitation department and distributed to recipients. These relationships are not only cost-effective but are also a great way for the group to be promoted in the wider community.

Members of Knox branch also have a long-standing relationship with the cardiac ward at Knox Private Hospital, visiting two or three times a month. Branch volunteers wear their Heartbeat identification badges and take promotional pamphlets. The sister-in-charge advises them of any patient who may benefit from contact with the group and the volunteers then make themselves known, have an informal chat and promote the services of the support group.

The quality and longevity of these relationships are a testament to the commitment and trust members of Knox branch have developed within their community over many years.

## Pro Bono and Corporate Volunteering Programs

Many organisations have a social responsibility commitment where they encourage their employees to volunteer for limited periods to Not For Profit organisations in their community. There are a number of different programs and initiatives employed by organisations and businesses. The best way to find out about them is through general searching on the internet or by going directly to organisations' websites. A number of these organisations have successfully partnered with chronic illness support groups. These include:

### Pro Bono Australia

Pro Bono Australia is a national on-line hub for people who want to engage with Not For Profit organisations. The organisation runs a free Volunteer Match Service that invites Not For Profit organisations to advertise for assistance from skilled volunteers. You can ask for assistance for a specific task such as how to keep your books, advice on website design or even on finding a board member. The service also offers professional advice, guidance or mentoring.

The service is free and offered by Pro Bono Australia as part of their commitment to resourcing the community sector across Australia.

**For more information and to advertise for a volunteer to help assist with a task for your group go to [www.probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer](http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer) and then Post a Volunteer Opportunity.**

### NAB

NAB runs an Employee Volunteer Program where it provides 16 hours paid volunteer leave each year for its staff. Support groups can apply for assistance with varying tasks associated with running an event, keeping the books, mail-outs, promotion and more.

**For details go to [www.nab.com.au](http://www.nab.com.au) and search for Employee Volunteer Program.**

### VicSuper

VicSuper is a public superannuation fund which runs a Community Involvement Program encouraging staff to participate in volunteering and fundraising activities with local charities. It has an established partnership with Heartbeat Victoria Inc.

**For more information go to [www.vicsuper.com.au](http://www.vicsuper.com.au) and search for Community Involvement.**

## CASE STUDY

### Super partnership keeps hearts beating

Heartbeat Victoria Inc. Council oversees the Heartbeat branches and affiliates across Victoria and was chosen by superannuation fund VicSuper to be its community partner. This relationship has been a very positive and mutually beneficial one.

“As a super company VicSuper I think saw us as a good fit for their community partnership program. They wanted to support us as they understood the importance of people managing their risk factors for heart disease so they can enjoy their retirement. The partnership has been a wonderful one for us. Their staff raise funds for us during the year which we have been able to distribute to our groups who may need equipment, letterhead and administration support”, Heartbeat Council Secretary Robyn Fennell added.

Melanie Hart, Senior Superannuation Adviser for VicSuper’s Blackburn branch said their relationship with Heartbeat has been inspiring and rewarding.

“The main focus of the program is to raise funds for Heartbeat which we do through the year by holding lunches and trivia nights and selling raffle tickets at these events. But this relationship has not only impacted on us professionally but on a personal level as well”, Melanie said.

Melanie’s father has had two heart attacks and her colleague Joanna’s mother had to have a heart operation. Having Robyn available for support was comforting for both of them.

“For me, it was just comforting to know that there was a support network available that I could turn to if I needed to ask questions about what my dad was going through. As great as hospitals are, getting questions answered in a way that regular people understand is not the easiest feat, so just knowing that if I had questions or concerns Heartbeat would be there to help me was fantastic”, Melanie said.

Such is the impact of the partnership Melanie and her colleague Joanna have volunteered to act as Assistant Treasurers for Heartbeat, offering practical assistance with financial management and spreadsheets.

“Raising money for Heartbeat and helping out as a volunteer is easy. We can see where everything is going and we could not be more supportive of the work they do. This is a thank you from us but also from the broader community”, Melanie said.

## Recommended websites and resources



The information contained in this toolkit has been sourced from a number of places. Direct links have been provided throughout the resource but the organisations listed below can provide more information about heart health or about the community sector.

**The Heart Foundation** website has extensive up to date information and resources on everything to do with your heart - [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)

You can also find the locations and contacts for Heart Foundation Walking Groups.

**Heart Foundation Health Information Service** will give you personalised information on heart health, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle from qualified health professionals for the cost of a local call. Call 1300 36 27 87 during business hours

**Chronic Illness Alliance** offers resources for people living with a chronic illness. It runs a Peer Support Network made up of several key health organisations and has links to peer support information and resources - [www.chronicillness.org.au](http://www.chronicillness.org.au)

**Not for Profit Compliance Support Centre** is a one stop shop for Victorian not for profit organisations to access regulatory information, licences, forms and related compliance resources - [www.nfpcompliance.vic.gov.au](http://www.nfpcompliance.vic.gov.au)

**The Cancer Council** has produced a number of excellent publications with information and advice on how to run cancer support groups.

Highly recommended : Cancer Council – Cancer Support Groups: A Guide to setting up and maintaining a group. Available from [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au)

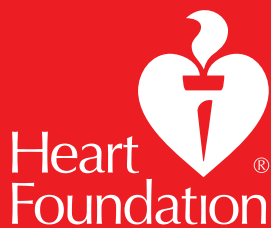
**Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV)** - [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

**Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)** - <http://www.acnc.gov.au>

**ATO non profit** <http://www.ato.gov.au/Non-profit/>

**Our Community** is an on-line social enterprise providing resources, tools, advice and training for community groups - [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)





For heart health information  
1300 36 27 87  
[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)

The Heart Foundation saves lives and improves health through funding world-class cardiovascular research, guidelines for health professionals, informing the public and assisting people with cardiovascular disease.

As a charity, the Heart Foundation relies on donations and gifts to continue its lifesaving research and health education work. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women. So when you help the Heart Foundation, your donation could go towards research or education that might help save the life of someone you know, perhaps even someone you love or quite possibly yourself.

If you would like to make a donation please call 1300 55 02 82 or visit our website at [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)