

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

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#### BOARD

President – Robyn Fennell

Secretary – Louise Zambello

Treasurer – Alex Huang

Asst. Treasurer – Arthur Fennell

Editor – Adrian Cloonan

Lynda Andrews, Dr. Rudy Lopes,  
Ted Williams, Dr. Ojas Mehta.

**VISION:** to be an excellent and well recognised peer support organization that 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 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.

## “Heartbeat Happenings” Dec 2017



### **Cardiovascular disease (CVD), heart disease and heart attack** – (facts from The Heart Foundation).

CVD is a major cause of death in Australia, with 45,392 deaths attributed to CVD in Australia in 2015 - one Australian dying every 12 minutes.

CVD is one of Australia's largest health problems. The issue affects 4.2m people. It claimed the lives of 45,392 Australians (almost 50% of all deaths) in 2015 – all largely preventable.

Lower socio-economic groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those living in remote areas had the highest rate of death and hospitalisation from CVD.

It is estimated more than 400,000 Australians have had a heart attack at some stage.

Each year some 54,000 people suffer a heart attack, equating to 1 attack per 10 minutes.

Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, low fruit and vegetable intake, alcohol and smoking. 9 in 10 adult Australians have at least one risk factor for CVD and 1 in 4 have 3 or more risk factors.

Smoking is the single most important cause of ill health and death in Australia, followed by obesity.

New Heart Foundation Research shows death rates from heart disease are 60% higher in rural and regional towns compared to the city, while Shepparton and Bendigo have the highest heart hospital admission rates in Victoria. (Ref Shepparton News Nov. 7th.2017)

Heartbeat Victoria Peer Support groups offer members heart health education, motivation, sharing of experiences, social activities and exercise – all valuable in making the right life-style choices.

There appears a lack of public awareness about heart disease, its risk factors and the ongoing management to prevent re-occurrence of disease progression.

Heartbeat Committees need to maintain strong links to the medical, health and community services in their area.



**Robyn Fennell – President**

### **Knox Branch**

Heartbeat Victoria Knox Branch was re-established on 25 October 2017 with a dinner at the Mulgrave Country Club.

The meeting was attended by members of Knox Private Hospital cardiac unit, Victorian Rehabilitation cardiac unit, previous members of Knox Heartbeat and Board Members of Heartbeat Victoria.

Robyn Fennell, President of Heartbeat Victoria, spoke about the importance and benefits of peer support groups.

Already a range of activities is planned – monthly meetings with guest speakers, a walking and an exercise group. Knox organiser (Board member Lynda Andrews) was thrilled with the reformation of the group). The Board congratulates Lynda on her initiative.



**Lynda Andrews – Board Member/Knox member**

### **Grampians Branch**

Grampians Branch held their AGM on 4 September, 2017 with 17 members present.

President Alan Kettle reported on the successful year of the small support group.

The calendar included a variety of speakers and entertainers. It included Tai Chi by Grampians Health; to armchair visits to other places and photo nights. Members also enjoyed singing sessions with Geoff on button accordion and Alan on guitar. The Branch continues to provide a speaker once every 8 weeks at the local Cardiac Rehab Program.

Recently 4 members attended the Heartbeat Ararat Branch AGM and plan to meet for a social activity in 2018.

### **Ararat Branch**

Heartbeat Ararat Branch were saddened by the passing of their President of many years, Brook Webb. Ararat group has operated since 1995, and greatly valued Brook's services.

Ararat Branch membership has decreased over time and some previous links with other services have not been available or changed. Robyn and Arthur attended the Heartbeat Ararat Branch AGM on 21 November are helping members re-establish the group. Contact was made with several health and community groups.

### **Goulburn Valley Branch**

Regular monthly dinner meetings with a guest speaker provides education and opportunities to share experiences and socialise. Members also enjoy our monthly walks and meal together at local venues. This serves as a reminder to keep up regular exercise and move about as much as able.

In the past last 2 months we have welcomed 5 new members to our support group. Our last meeting was a Christmas Dinner and meeting enjoyed by 29 members.

Our monthly Newsletter circulated to 64 members provides valuable communication and information to those who cannot attend meetings regularly.

### **Bendigo Branch**

With 330 members, Bendigo Branch is firing on all cylinders. With a new committee elected and an active social and fund-raising calendar, Bendigo hosted 115 members at their recent Christmas lunch.

This Branch recently donated \$20,000 to Bendigo Health – with this financial hand-over resulting in considerable regional media publicity.

## Healthy Living

(by Heartbeat Victoria Board Member Dr. Ojas Mehta)



### The heart as an organ

So why is it so difficult to replace a pump? Well the heart is more than just a pump. It is dynamic and responds to the body's needs and environment. It beats 100,000 times a day for your entire life. It generates the right amount of force to distribute blood around the body, slowing down during sleep and working harder during activity. Much of the signalling to determine how hard the heart needs to work is done through an intricate network made of nerve cells, sensors and hormones.

### Heart fuel

The heart feeds off the fuel it pumps around the body. The oxygen, glucose and fatty acids carried in the blood are also required for the heart muscle to enable it to function.

There are no times for breaks. With all the complexity involved in what would on the surface seem like a simple pump, there are times that the heart can fail to perform to the body's requirements. In these instances, there is a mismatch between the oxygen and glucose provided to tissues and various organs and the demand that these organs around the body have. This mismatch can result in various symptoms.

### Problems and trouble

Problems commonly occur within the electrical transmission, the arteries dedicated to supply blood back to the heart, the heart muscle itself and the valvular apparatus. Trouble with the electrical transmission can result in the heart pumping too quickly or too slowly. Trouble with poor blood supply through the three major arteries of the heart results in a build-up of toxins in the muscle. This quickly leads to chest pain and if prolonged, a heart attack. Trouble with the valvular apparatus means that blood cannot enter or leave the heart chambers appropriately. This results in backflow of blood into the lungs or insufficient blood reaching vital organs. These issues can result in the symptoms commonly observed in patients with heart disease.

## Major heart disease symptoms

These major symptoms include palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, chest pain and collapse.

In my next article, I will write about a very common heart rhythm problem that many patients, young and old, suffer from Atrial Fibrillation.

*Dr Ojas Mehta has completed training in Internal Medicine (in 2018 he will commence Advanced Training in Cardiology).*

### Board News

The Heartbeat Victoria Board is currently considering the applications from two candidates who are interested in joining the Board.

More details to follow.

### Strategic Plan 2018-2021

At the 28 November 2017 meeting, the Board approved the consultant's proposed 2018-2021 Strategic Plan - with some slight variations to suit local circumstances.

Sub-committees were formed – these groups have the power to co-opt members to assist in their respective tasks.

## Heartbeat Victoria raffle!

(drawn 30 Nov. 2017)

### And the winners are –

1<sup>st</sup> prize (\$5000 Helloworld Shepparton travel voucher)  
L. Bell (ticket 09356 – sold by Bendigo Branch)

2<sup>nd</sup> prize (\$1480 On-kaparinga/Jason Queen bedding pack x 2)  
D. Treloar (ticket 10372 – sold by Bendigo Branch)

3<sup>rd</sup> prize (\$1000 Helloworld Shepparton travel voucher, RACV accommodation package and Samsonite luggage)  
J. Barrette (ticket 24173 – sold by Goulburn Valley Branch)

4<sup>th</sup> prize (\$600 selection of gift cards)  
W. Williams (ticket 12964 – sold by Sunraysia Branch)

5<sup>th</sup> prize (\$400 mixed hamper of goods)  
S. Kendrick (ticket 21727 – sold by Epworth Branch)

25 members and guests attended the Branch Delegates meeting and oversaw the raffle draw at Moonee Ponds Club on 30 November 2017

Melanie Hart from VicSuper (one of our Heartbeat Victoria sponsors) drew the winning ticket.

## Gathering of Kindness

Board member, Louise Zambello, recently attended a Gathering of Kindness sponsored by The Hush Foundation (event was held at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre).

The message was that kindness matters, and that there is a direct correlation between organisational negativity and staff wellbeing and effectiveness. The aim of the movement is to redress this by building, nurturing and instilling a culture of kindness throughout the healthcare system.

Those attending came from both inside and outside the healthcare sector and included actors, musicians, healthcare professionals, patients and their family and carers.

The suggestion to stop for a while and imagine that kindness, trust and respect should be the fundamental components of the healthcare system; and that bullying of not only staff, but also patients, is unacceptable, was well received.

Participants were given an opportunity to share ideas, work and projects - the aim being to better understand how we can improve our healthcare environment for everyone involved.

*Everyone has a role to play; kindness starts within all of us.*



**Louise Zambello - Board member and Sunbury Branch Secretary**

## Sunbury Branch

More than 30 people including health professionals, local groups, individuals and some Heartbeat Victoria Council Board members attended an Information Night on 25 October 2017 at the Goonawarra Community Centre. Robyn Fennell, President of Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. gave a presentation on the importance and benefits of peer support following a cardiac event.

An Inaugural Meeting to form the Heartbeat Victoria Sunbury Branch was held on 14 November and Chris Hogan, Associate Professor gave a presentation entitled **Keeping Health is Simple**.

Louise Zambello, Board Secretary takes this opportunity to thank Charmain and Dr Sam of Goonawarra Medical Centre; Rob Mitchell, Federal Member for McEwen; and the Hume City Council and several local health professionals for their interest and support.