



Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

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#### **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

President: Christine Rees

Vice President: Barry Nixon

Secretary: Vivien Williamson

Treasurer: Karen Saccuzzo

Board Members: John Allen; Elaine Gregory;  
Professor Andrew Murphy; Kevin Reid; Vanaja  
Thomas

**VISION:** Every individual and family affected by heart disease has access to a compassionate community, vital resources and the highest quality of care, enabling them to live empowered heart-healthy lives.

**MISSION:** To foster an active, compassionate and inclusive peer support network in Victoria for individuals and families affected by all forms of heart disease and heart-related health issues.

Through our community driven groups, we provide emotional support, share information, advocate for better health outcomes and raise funds for cardiac equipment and improved cardiac care.

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#### **A Message from the President**

Welcome to our new members, I hope you will enjoy your involvement with Heartbeat Victoria as we work towards better cardiac education, heart health equipment and lots of support for all those with a cardiac health challenge. Heart disease is not well covered in the media and is not discussed, regardless of being the most common cause of death in Australia.

A diagnosis of heart disease, or a cardiac condition, can be very stressful, further impacting your health. Cardiac peer support is available by contacting [hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au](mailto:hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au).

Heartbeat Victoria is cardiac peer support, during or after diagnosis, by heart patients for heart patients and their families or carers. Involvement with Heartbeat Victoria also gives the opportunity to give back to the system and make it stronger, by being involved with fund raising, research or education.

Thank you to all branch and affiliate members who have taken up official positions. We are very grateful for the work you do to keep our groups going and our heart health services supported.

During the summer, Heartbeat Victoria has been represented at Wellsprings Women's Health space to talk about having a Heart Health Check. This was an English as a second language group and was conducted with the help of an interpreter. If you have a group who would like to have a speaker visit, please contact any Board member.

Enjoy the cooler days, have a happy Easter and start preparing for the winter.

**Christine Rees**



## New Strategic Plan

At its meeting in December 2024, the Board of Heartbeat Victoria was excited to adopt its new Strategic Plan - *Together for Heart Health: Our Plan for the Future 2024-2027*. A copy of the Plan is included at the end of this newsletter.

The Plan was developed by the Board following a strategic planning workshop which considered the strengths of the organisation and the key issues it is facing and also considered information from Heartbeat Victoria's affiliates and branches about their current membership, meetings and activities, their involvement in cardiac rehabilitation and fundraising activities, the issues currently affecting them and how Heartbeat Victoria could best support them.

The Plan includes a new Vision and Mission and is based on the values of respect, empowerment, collaboration and hope.

The Plan includes the following three strategic directions:



**Supporting and strengthening** – To strengthen our foundation and expand our impact by supporting our network, fostering growth and enhancing the quality of peer support.



**Fostering connections** – To build and foster organisational and community connections and collaborative partnerships that will build cardiac related peer support.



**Dynamic leadership** – To provide dynamic and responsible leadership which will build capacity, elevate our impact, and guide our mission with clarity and purpose.

The Plan will be delivered over the coming three years via a detailed action plan based on goals identified in relation to the three strategic directions and the Board will report annually on the progress of implementation of the Strategic Plan.



## Global Heart Hub Affiliate

Heartbeat Victoria has recently joined as an affiliate of the Global Heart Hub.

As an alliance of patient-driven organisations, Global Heart Hub believes that all people living with cardiovascular disease deserve the highest quality of care and equal access to recognised gold standard treatments.

Global Heart Hub works to raise awareness and understanding of heart disease, share best practices and treatment guidelines, uplift patient voices, and drive tangible change to policy and practice through a network of affiliates and advocates.

Affiliates of the Global Heart Hub:

- have the opportunity to connect with heart patient organisations and advocates from around the world to collaborate, share best practices, and be part of the global conversation on heart disease;
- can receive research findings, publications and resources that can be leveraged to meet their goals and gain access to direct support for training, workshops, and networking opportunities; and
- participate in global advocacy and awareness campaigns.

For further information: [www.globalhearthub.org](http://www.globalhearthub.org)

## Heart Health



### Researcher spotlight: Dr Kegan Moneghetti



For Dr Kegan Moneghetti, exercising is in his blood. So it seemed only natural that this passion would spill over into his work as a cardiologist.

Today, we take a look at the motivations behind his breakthrough research into the power of exercise to identify and treat disease.

*What does your research involve?*

I've always had a passion for exercise. During my training as a cardiologist, I became fascinated by how powerful it can be to identify and treat disease. My research involves harnessing exercise to better diagnose, prognosticate and treat a variety of diseases. We are currently working on a study into how using exercise early in the rehabilitation process can improve outcomes for patients who have recently had a heart attack.

*If you could find the solution to any one problem, what would it be and why?*

Personalised recommendations for exercise training. The way that each individual responds to exercise is very different, yet we don't have a clear understanding of why. If we had a single test that could predict an individual's response, we would be able to personalise exercise recommendations. This would help people get the greatest health benefits from exercise in a time-poor and resource-limited society.

*If you were invited to present your work anywhere in the world, where would you want it to be, and why?*

The Institute of Sports Medicine in Rome. It has produced some of the seminal papers in sports cardiology and screening of athletes for sudden cardiac death. It would also encourage me to learn Italian which, despite my last name, is not very good.

*Can you tell us something about yourself that many of us may not know?*

I'm an avid hiker and trail runner, from the forest floor of the Otways, to making it to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro; I'll take any excuse to get off the grid and into nature.



### Early cardiac rehabilitation: the key to survival

A heart attack is a life-changing experience that can leave a person both physically and emotionally scarred.

Sadly, more than a quarter of heart attack survivors are readmitted to hospital within 90 days of discharge – a critical period when new problems arise, including second heart attacks. This is why regaining good heart function post-heart attack is crucial to quality of life and survival.

Filippo and Maria Casella Chair, Clinical Associate Professor Kegan Moneghetti at the Baker Institute, is leading groundbreaking research to prevent the progression of heart disease and enhance patient recovery following a heart attack.



Dr Moneghetti's work focuses on cardiac rehabilitation (CR), which involves exercise medicine, cardiac imaging and precision health, to reduce secondary heart events and improve the quality of life for heart patients.

"No matter your blood pressure or cholesterol level, once you've had a heart event, you've got heart disease. The plaque that caused the event remains, which means you're always at risk." – Dr Moneghetti.

Dr Moneghetti's CR program is a dynamic therapy combining supervised exercise training, heart healthy lifestyle education, behavioural interventions and counselling – empowering patients to take control of their health.

Despite significant evidence that patients who undergo cardiac rehabilitation have better recovery outcomes and a lower risk of secondary events, CR remains severely underutilised and inconsistently provided. Only one in four Australians with acute coronary syndrome receive optimal care - a gap Dr Moneghetti is determined to close.

Dr Moneghetti envisions a future where every patient receives a personalised CR program, enhancing their exercise capacity and health outcomes following a heart event.

"In a decade, we hope that after a heart attack, patients will undergo exercise tests and blood tests to receive a tailored CR program. This personalised approach could include varying lengths of aerobic activity based on their individual needs, ensuring each patient receives optimal care."

With your support, Dr Moneghetti and his team are continuing to advance CR research, bringing hope of better, earlier and more personalised interventions that empower patients and enhance heart health across the country.



The above article has been provided by our partner –Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute which, in addition to carrying out medical research focused on the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diabetes and heart disease, publishes a wide range of informative research-based materials that support heart health

<https://www.baker.edu.au/-/media/documents/fact-sheets>



## Do you have atrial fibrillation and are willing to practise yoga?

The Alfred hospital and Baker Institute are conducting a research project to determine if practising yoga three times per week reduces episodes of atrial fibrillation (AF).

### Who can participate?

You may be eligible to participate in this clinical study if you:

- are 18 to 80 years old
- have AF that occurs periodically, or
- have persistent AF and on rhythm control medications
- have not undergone an AF ablation in the past 12 months
- are physically able to undertake yoga and willing to commit to regular practice.

### What's involved?

This is a 12-month study where half of the participants will practise yoga (somewhere easily accessible from their home) and the other half will receive standard care. All potential participants will undergo a review by an AF specialist cardiologist in Melbourne at the onset and the end of the study. Testing will include:

- VO2 max — cardiopulmonary test on a treadmill or bike
- echocardiography (heart ultrasound)
- blood tests
- questionnaires.

All participants will also be asked to monitor their heart rhythm over the 12-month study.

If you are interested in participating, or would like further information, please contact:

#### **Annie Curtin**

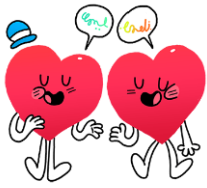
Clinical Research Coordinator

T: 0455 167 073

E:[yoga-af@alfred.org.au](mailto:yoga-af@alfred.org.au)

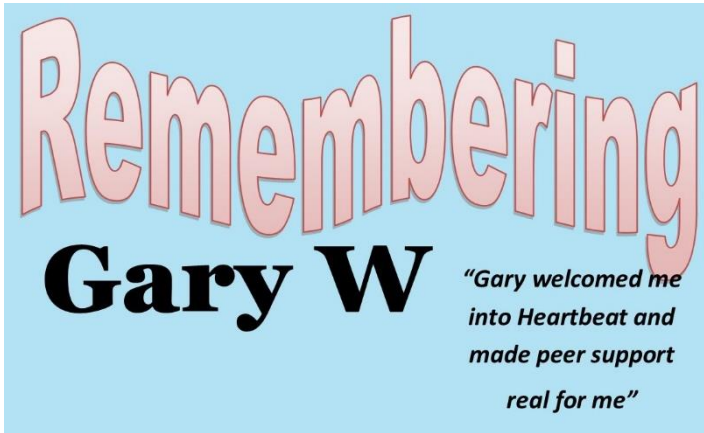
Further information and an application for the study can also be found via

<https://baker.edu.au/research/clinical-trials/yoga-af-study>



## Heart to Heart

featuring one member's heart health or peer support experience



### Remembering Gary W - A beginning and an end - by Barry Nixon

I discovered Heartbeat Ballarat, and cardiac peer support, at a cardiac patient information night that Cardiac Nurse Practitioner, Linda Macaulay, coordinated at Ballarat Health Services in 2011.

I was attracted to Heartbeat because two young people, Alex and Ketura, were manning the Heartbeat information stand at this event staged at Ballarat Base Hospital. I noticed Heartbeat had people of all ages involved.

It was hard to walk into my first Heartbeat Ballarat, Eat & Greet monthly meeting the first time. I walked in and there was a table of people seated about to have a meal, so I sat down at the next available seat.

I was opposite at guy called Gary and his young family. Gary and his wife Kevina, their daughter, Ketura (then Treasurer) and the young lady from the hospital information stand and their 15 year old son Matthew.

Gary said hello, reached out to me and made me feel very welcome. I forget the words, but I clearly remember how welcome Gary made me feel. Gary's wife had recently attended Cardiac Rehab in Ballarat after a cardiac event. As a young lady, she was terrified, and Gary came to Cardiac Rehab to support her.

They joined Heartbeat and the whole family became involved. Gary was terrific at signing up sponsors and the whole family volunteered their time at Heartbeat events.

Gary himself was a few years older than his wife. He lived with chronic illness and in the coming weeks I was able to reciprocate that friendship. Within a few weeks, Gary went into palliative care. I was able to visit him in the Gandara Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Centre.

Gary's last outing was to a Heartbeat Ballarat meeting. He wanted to come to the monthly Heartbeat meeting. Kevina organised for a maxi taxi and Gandara staff organised a wheelchair. Gary, Kevina and their children attended. I bought Gary his last beer that night.

Attending Heartbeat was very tiring for Gary and when he returned to Gandara he was happy, but exhausted. Within days, Gary passed from complications of cancer.

I was able to reciprocate the friendship that I had received at Heartbeat with his widow and young family in their hour of separation.

I regularly think of Gary because Gary was my peer support. Linda Macaulay, Alex, and I represented Heartbeat Ballarat at Gary's funeral.

Gary welcomed me into Heartbeat and made peer support real for me. I felt very welcome. I benefitted greatly from the social connection, shared information and friendship.

RIP Gary, a true Heartbeater, an Aussie character, mechanic, husband, father, and an inspiration to all who knew him.

# What's Happening

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

### Goulburn Valley

In November, a very successful Christmas themed fundraising evening event was held at the home of President Max and Jenny Hyland in Shepparton. Their very large entertainment room was set up beautifully to accommodate thirty members with the tables and the room decorated creating a magnificent Christmas atmosphere.



Members donated different foods and we all enjoyed a very delicious dinner.

Aside from the variety of food, there was lots of chatting and socialising which was a great way to share and celebrate Christmas together and, to add to the success, raise \$637.50 towards our cardiac equipment fundraising program.

In mid-January the Committee and members held a Planning Meeting to come up with identified actions to improve outcomes for members and expand our reach and what we offer through heart peer support activities in the Goulburn Valley community. This was a successful morning with sharing of ideas and actions to be implemented. Planning has commenced for an information afternoon meeting at Tatura Community House in conjunction with Heartbeat Goulburn Valley and

the Community Health Nurse, Goulburn Valley Health, also looking at possibility of forming a walking group.

We are continuing to hold dinner meetings on the first Monday of the month at the Peppermill Inn Hotel conference room Shepparton and this commenced in February. New member Lynn was welcomed at that meeting. Our first coffee morning for the year was a great success, with thirteen members attending. February also saw the release of our annual calendar of activities, with a couple of larger social events in the planning stage, yet to be added.

At the planning meeting we also decided to change the style of our meetings to be less formal format. We now have short reports from Committee members (in the areas for which they are responsible), with a full report from the Treasurer. This is proving successful and allows more time for heart health and wellness education and discussion.

In March we will commence our walks around Lake Victoria, followed by lunch. Members are also continuing to volunteer at Goulburn Valley Health's Cardiac Rehabilitation program, providing tea and coffee after the exercise program, as well as information packs and newsletters in relation to Heartbeat Goulburn Valley and the heart peer support it offers. A presentation about our branch is also provided during the eight-week program.





## Ballarat

Melbourne Cup Day 2024 was dress up day for the Heart Foundation indoor walkers in Ballarat. Prizes for Best Lady, Best Man, Most Creative, and Least Effort.

It was a fun morning. Numbers were down due to members going to the Cup, but fun was up. Neil from Ballarat Badminton judged the winners. Glenda won the ladies competition. Ross won the men's competition. Thanks to Anne G for organising prizes and the photos.



Heartbeat Ballarat also held its AGM in February and has a new Committee comprising:

**President:**  
Mark Vorstenbosch

**Deputy Presidents:**  
Linda Macaulay and Helen Sarra

**Treasurer:**  
Anne Gow

**Assistant Treasurer:**  
Bernie Brisbane

**Assistant Secretary:**  
Barry Nixon

**Social Activities Committee:**  
Lyn Webb (Lead), Alan Bell and Leigh Miller

With the hotter days fading, walking is a good cost-effective exercise and easily done. Ballarat has some very active walking groups. These walks are a regular feature of the Ballarat program, usually finishing with a coffee and chat.



## Bendigo

Bendigo Heartbeat is excited to have been able to facilitate a successful application for funding of a \$3500 Automated External Defibrillator for the Chum Street Uniting Church in Golden Square where the Heartbeat group holds its regular bimonthly meetings.



The Unit was generously donated by the Kangaroo Flat

Community Enterprise, which is a not-for-profit community organisation formed by residents of Kangaroo Flat and Districts to provide community input and resources into local initiatives, programs and facilities. Since its inception, the Enterprise has donated over \$800,000 to various not-for-profit community groups in the local area.

Heartbeat Bendigo has itself also recently donated \$10,000 to Bendigo Hospital to assist with the purchase of a medical grade treadmill for the Cardiac Rehabilitation area.

Due to a generous Volunteer Grant from the Federal Government, via Lisa Chesters MP (Member for Bendigo), Heartbeat Bendigo has been able to purchase some items to support the work of the group including:

- A cordless sound system and microphones for our General meetings; and
- A Square terminal which will enable payments for membership and social events to be made by card.

## Sunraysia



At our November meeting, members enjoyed a visit from Bree from Ambulance Victoria, who came along to discuss her Heart - Safe Community role in the Mildura/Merbein area.

We held our annual Christmas Dinner on December 4th at the Red Cliffs Club and we all enjoyed a lovely meal together.

We didn't have any meetings or cuppa catch ups during December or January, but resumed them in February.

We will once again be involved with the Murray 2 Moyne cycle relay. It is to be held on April 5th and

6th. We extend a big thank you to Almond Australia for including us in this great fundraising event, which will benefit our group and other regional health charities.

We have started our planning for Heartbeat Sunraysia's 40th birthday celebrations, which will be held in September this year. Our members are enjoying reading and looking at all the old minutes and photos and the donations given by the group to our Sunraysia area during those 40 years are definitely a credit to everyone who has been involved.

**Please send us your latest news for inclusion in the Winter 2025 edition of Heartbeat Happenings which will be published in May 2025 (send to [vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au](mailto:vivien@heartbeatvictoria.org.au) by Friday April 4, 2025.**

## Together for Heart Health: Our Plan for the Future 2024-2027



### Mission

*To foster an active, compassionate and inclusive peer support network in Victoria for individuals and families affected by all forms of heart disease and heart-related issues.*

*Through our community driven groups, we provide emotional support, share information, advocate for better health outcomes and raise funds for cardiac equipment and improved cardiac care.*



### Vision

*Every individual and family affected by heart disease has access to a compassionate community, vital resources, and the highest quality of care, enabling them to live empowered heart-healthy lives.*

## VALUES



### Respect

We recognise and value the dignity of every person and we value diversity of experience and thought.



### Empowerment

We support our members to make informed decisions for themselves through connection, information and membership.



### Collaboration

We work with others to acquire knowledge, to build connections and share information for the benefit of members.



### Hope

We cultivate optimism and resilience, inspiring individuals and families to look forward with confidence.

## FROM NOW TO THE FUTURE

Heartbeat Victoria supports several hardworking and committed voluntary peer support groups across Victoria which provide highly valued support for individuals and their families affected by heart disease and heart-related conditions.

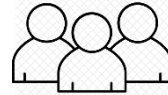
Building membership and the changing needs of cardiac patients and the ways in which support can be provided, have all been challenging for existing groups. Opportunities exist to raise the profile of Heartbeat Victoria, to build on partnerships and to support membership growth.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS



### Supporting and strengthening

To strengthen our foundation and expand our impact by supporting our network, fostering growth, and enhancing the quality of peer support.



### Fostering connections

To build and foster strong organisational and community connections and collaborative partnerships that will build cardiac related peer support.



### Dynamic leadership

To provide dynamic and responsible leadership which will build capacity, elevate our impact, and guide our mission with clarity and purpose.

## GOALS

- Consolidate and strengthen existing Heartbeat Victoria peer support groups.
- Enhance the quality of peer support provided by Heartbeat Victoria.
- Respond to the needs of non-members in relation to their peer support needs.

- Continue to build relationships with existing partners to support collaboration, share resources and achieve common goals.
- Consider opportunities for new partnerships which would benefit Heartbeat Victoria.
- Build connections with other community groups to raise awareness and build relationships.

- Maintain strong legal and financial practices to protect and sustain the organisation.
- Build a skilled and engaged Board to lead the organisation effectively.
- Strengthen communication and engagement with key stakeholders so as to build trust, enhance collaboration and improve support.
- Develop a better understanding of other organisations that support peer support.