



Heartbeat Happenings

Spring 2023

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

ABN 76 073 229 523

Address: P.O. Box 144, Parkville, Vic, 3052

Facebook: www.facebook.com/HeartbeatVictoria

Website: www.heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Email: hello@heartbeatvictoria.org.au

Tel: 0474 866 474

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President: Linda Macaulay

Secretary: Barry Nixon

Treasurer: Karen Saccuzzo

Assistant Treasurer: Tamieka Snowden

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

VISION: To be an excellent and well recognised peer support organisation which assists in improving the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of people living with heart disease or a heart condition.

MISSION: To advise and promote associated support groups in conducting peer support activities for people living with heart disease, to ensure they have a better understanding of the impact of their heart disease or condition; how they might seek ongoing services and support in their local area; and how to raise funds to improve cardiac services.

© Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. 2022

In this issue

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

Board Business

[Annual General Meeting 2023](#)

[Nominations for the Board](#)

[A new grant opportunity coming soon](#)

Heart Health

[12 questions you should read before you see your doctor](#)

[Heart Health Check](#)

Heart to Heart

[Kevin Tolhurst AM – Heartbeat – Personal Journey](#)

What's Happening?

[Sunraysia](#)

[Goulburn Valley](#)

[Ballarat](#)

[Bendigo](#)



Annual General Meeting 2023

The Annual General Meeting of Heartbeat Victoria Council Incorporated will be held via Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday September 13, 2023.

The agenda for the meeting will include:

- Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous AGM;
- Presentation of the Annual Report, including the Financial Report;
- Approval of the annual membership and insurance fees;
- Consideration of any special business items; and
- Election of Board members.

All Heartbeat members are welcome to attend.

Branches and Affiliates should inform the Board Secretary, Barry Nixon (barry@heartbeatvictoria.org.au), of their delegates (or their nominees) who will be attending the meeting. In addition, any items of special business should be notified to Barry by Monday August 14.

Nominations for the Board

The business of Heartbeat Victoria Council Incorporated is managed by a Board of Management.

The Board can comprise between 7 and 11 members and currently comprises nine members. Board members are elected for a two-year term and six of the current Board members will therefore retire at the AGM but may nominate for re-election.

Members of Heartbeat are strongly encouraged to nominate for positions on the Board and a nomination form is included at the end of this newsletter. In addition to positions as Ordinary Board members, separate elections are held for specific positions, as shown on the nomination form.

If you are a Heartbeat member and would like to contribute your skills and experience to the Board of Management your nomination would be very welcome.

A new grant opportunity coming soon

The following opportunity has recently been announced by the Australian Government and Heartbeat branches and affiliates may be eligible to apply.

2023-24 Volunteer Grants

Volunteer Grants support the work of local community organisations by enabling the inclusion of vulnerable people and promoting awareness to increase participation in volunteering.

The 2023-24 Volunteer Grants Opportunity is expected to open for applications in the second half of 2023. Grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 will be available to assist eligible not-for-profit community organisations support the efforts of their volunteers.

The Grant Opportunity Guidelines are on GrantConnect with other supporting documentation to be published when the opportunity is open for application.

To receive the latest information for this upcoming grant opportunity, please subscribe to the Community Grants Hub or GrantConnect.



12 questions you should read before you see your doctor

[Source: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/medical/questions-to-ask-your-doctor>]



When you see your doctor, cardiologist or other healthcare professional, it's not always easy to know what to ask – especially if you only have a short time with them and you're feeling worried about your health. Here's our quick guide.

Not all of these questions will be relevant to every situation. Choose the ones that fit your circumstances and who you're speaking to.

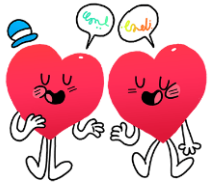
1. What are these tests for?
2. Can I have a copy of my test results?
3. What are the benefits and risks of this treatment/ medication? Ask for an explanation of the relative risks in a way that make sense to you. For example, 'For every 100 people who have this surgery, how many on average will experience complications?'
4. Are there any alternatives to this treatment?
5. What will happen if I don't have any treatment?
6. When should I expect to hear from you/ the hospital/ the professional you're referring me to?
7. What should I do if I don't hear anything?
8. I need transport to the hospital/ home from the hospital – how can I arrange this? You may be able to get help with transport, especially if you have a disability. Find out if this is available to you and how to arrange it. If you see a pre-admissions nurse before you go into hospital, this is a good time to ask about this.
9. Where can I get more information or support about my condition/ this test/ procedure/medication?
10. Is there a support group or anything similar?
11. Who do I contact/ what do I do if things get worse?
12. Do I need to make my next appointment before I leave?
13. Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Heart Health Check

The Heart Foundation has advised that on Friday 5 May, the federal Health and Aged Care Minister, Mark Butler announced a 2-year extension of the Medicare subsidy supporting the Heart Health Check.

The extension ensures that millions of at-risk Australians will continue to have a chance to avoid a debilitating heart attack or stroke. It is expected that at least 250,000 Australians will take up the Check in this time.

The Heart Foundation thanked all those who had supported its campaign on this important issue.



Heart to Heart

featuring one member's heart health experience

Kevin Tolhurst AM– Heartbeat – Personal Journey



My experience has taught me that heart disease does not discriminate and, for many, it comes as a surprise. However, once you know you have heart disease, you are forever changed.

Heartbeat has shown me that there is such a wide range of experiences amongst people with heart disease and that the impact is not limited to the individual, but also shared by family and friends.

In my case, I had no idea that I had heart disease. My cholesterol tests and blood pressure measurements showed nothing out of the ordinary and nothing to be concerned about. I know that I have always been a bit overweight, but I have always led a physically active life, including bushwalking, firefighting, forest surveying, gardening, and house maintenance.

It was in November 2018, after walking rapidly up a hill on a 35°C day, that I felt really unwell and was not recovering well. In fact, as I was driving my car, I was concerned that I may have to pull over at any moment. This went on for a few hours. Next day, I was okay again. About a week later, I had been engaged in trimming a hedge and mowing some grass on another hot day and again I felt really unwell after it. This was quite out of character, so I decided to consult a GP. My GP sent me to Ballarat Hospital to undertake a Stress Test. The Stress Test involves walking on a treadmill with increasingly greater inclines and speeds. Eventually, the test was stopped by the cardiologist present. My heart was not functioning properly under physical stress. A week later (between Christmas and New Year 2018), I was given an angiogram and had two stents inserted. I was aged 64 and had not long retired from full-time work.

During my recovery time in ICU, one of the nurses presented me with a Heart Foundation booklet explaining heart disease and how to live with it. The booklet had been donated to the hospital by Heartbeat Ballarat. My wife suggested to me that it might be a good idea to join Heartbeat for some peer support. My wife could see that I needed some help beyond the medical treatment.

Discovering that I had Ischemic Heart Disease shook the earth beneath my feet. My thoughts were filled with uncertainty, and fear of the unknown. I had been thrust into a world I had no understanding of. My life had changed. I was now required to take medication daily for the rest of my life. I was taking medication that meant that I bruised at the slightest bump. Even minor scratches would bleed incessantly. What would happen if I was injured in a car accident? What about if I cut myself (again) whilst using a chainsaw? What if I gouged myself with a stick while walking in the bush?

I couldn't give up my life, but what changes did I have to make? I had already lost a lot of strength due to inactivity for about 5 to 6 weeks before the tests and the angiogram. What strength could I expect to get back? What would happen if I over-exerted myself?

Doubts, fears, anxiety, disappointment filled my life.

As a scientist, I was measuring and recording my blood pressure and weight daily. I decided to purchase a smartwatch to measure my heart rate and number of steps. I printed out a list of my medications and key contact details for my wife, GP, and Cardiologist and put a copy in the front of my wallet and in the back of my phone. I always carried two bandages with me that I had purchased for snake-bite, but thought they would also be useful if I injured myself and had trouble stopping the bleeding. I also purchased a satellite emergency locator device for when I was travelling in remote areas.



Prior to having the stents implanted, I would walk 10 to 20 km in the bush without much trouble. After the operation, I was struggling to walk around the block. Enter Heartbeat Ballarat. With the supported walking program at Heartbeat Ballarat, I was able to walk in the company of others who understood my vulnerabilities. We walked along the track at Lake Wendouree which was flat and with plenty of seats if you needed a rest. Walking with the Heartbeat group enabled me to build up my strength and confidence, although it was some time before I was confident enough to go bushwalking alone.

My wife and I attended most of the monthly meetings held by Heartbeat where we were able to talk to people with a wide range of heart related issues and their family support members. Guest speakers covered a wide range of issues, most related to living with heart disease. These meetings were incredibly useful for my wife and me. I started to better understand how I could live a full life with heart disease. I better understood what questions I should be asking of my GP and cardiologist. I also understood that heart disease experience is unique to each person, but there are some common elements. Through my involvement with Heartbeat, I was urged to enrol in a rehabilitation program, which I did. The rehabilitation program was a combination of education and exercise. I particularly found the supervised exercise useful to discover what my new body was physically capable of. All of this helped reduce my uncertainty and anxiety.

I made some good friends at Heartbeat and have benefited greatly from their peer support and the support of the health professionals who work with Heartbeat.

Four years on, I still deal with some anxiety related to my heart condition, but now manage to have a reasonably normal life. My local doctor commented to me one day that I was lucky to have heart disease because I would receive much closer medical attention as a result. Those people who have heart disease and don't yet know it are at much greater risk.

Today, I still have not had a major car accident or cut myself with a chainsaw. Changes to my medication means that bleeding and bruising are much reduced. I have been working on fires again, although, I must be careful to avoid heat stress and dehydration. When I travel remotely, or in the bush by myself, I carry my satellite emergency locator beacon with me. I still have a list of my medications and emergency contact details in my wallet and the back of my phone.

Thanks to Heartbeat and the medical profession, my life is now relatively normal.

What's Happening

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

Sunraysia



Sunraysia has been holding its monthly meetings and monthly Cuppa catch ups. At its last meeting in July, Marcus Guthrie, CEO of Mildura Private Hospital came along as guest speaker and it was very interesting to hear him speak about the new Cancer Treatment Centre the hospital has just opened up for regional people. It will save travelling to a city for treatment now and Heartbeat Sunraysia may be able to help out in the future with heart related items.

Icon Cancer Centre Mildura will deliver cancer care close to home for residents in Sunraysia and surrounding regions in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

Goulburn Valley

Penny Whelan, Unit Manager, of the Clinical Diagnostic Unit at Goulburn Valley Health was the educational speaker at Goulburn Valley Heartbeat's June meeting.

Penny provided information about the many cardiac implantable electronic devices, including pacemakers, implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), biventricular pacemakers and cardiac loop recorders, which are designed to help control or monitor irregular heartbeats in people with certain heart rhythm disorders and heart failure.



GV HB member Astrid Gough speaking with Penny Whelan

Penny brought samples of the devices to show and answered many questions for members which was very beneficial to all present.



Members Gerald and Howard deep in conversation about their devices.

Ballarat



In June, the St John of God Ballarat Hospital CEO met with representatives from the Ballarat Highlands Bowls Region and Heartbeat Ballarat, to receive a donation from their Annual Heartbeat tournament. Ballarat Highlands Bowls Region have staged annual Heartbeat cardiac fundraising event for 35+ years. Ross and Jean Wiggins represented Heartbeat Ballarat at the cheque presentation.

Heartbeat Ballarat President Bernie Brisbane celebrated his 75 birthday in July. Bernie and wife Liz walk most Tuesdays with the Heartbeat indoor walking group. Bernie is very approachable and welcoming. Members love to say hello, share a chat and coffee with Bernie and Liz.

Walking outdoors in winter in Ballarat can be wet and cold. These Heartbeat Victoria Park Walkers meet rain, hail, or shine every Saturday at 9.30am.



Bendigo



Xmas in July at Tudor Tavern in Barham was a lovely winter celebration for Bendigo members.





Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc. Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 13 September, 2023

Election of Board Members, including Office Bearers

NOMINATION FORM

Name: _____

Position (see below): _____

Nominated by: _____

Seconded by: _____

I accept my nomination for the above position

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return your nomination form to the Board Secretary, Barry Nixon via email barry@heartbeatvictoria.org.au by Tuesday 12 September, 2023

Board Positions

President
Vice President
Secretary
Assistant Secretary

Treasurer
Assistant Treasurer
Ordinary Board Member

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