

From the *heart*

AUTUMN EDITION

COVER STORY

REMOTE LAUNDRIES:

A simple way to
help tackle a
complex disease

AT THE CUTTING EDGE:

Improving outcomes
for people experiencing
cardiac arrest

Our hearts together



I'm excited to welcome you to our first edition of From the Heart for 2024. This issue highlights the power of connection and community to improve the lives of people with heart disease.

Thanks to your support, we have been able to grow the MyHeart MyLife online support community for people living with heart disease and their carers. The community allows members to connect with others on a similar journey. In a safe virtual space, people can share their experiences, find encouragement, make connections, and discover ways to lead a heart-healthy life together. Read more about the MyHeart MyLife community on page 4.

We also share the stories of the wonderful people who make important work like this possible. Read about the Rocky Wrappers on page 6, an incredible group of people in Rockhampton who have been raising funds for cardiovascular research for three decades. You'll also meet Maureen, one of our most dedicated supporters. Find out what drives her ongoing support of the Heart Foundation on page 8.

The stories in this issue are a testament to the power of community and what we can achieve together. Thank you for being part of our lifechanging community.

David Lloyd

Chief Executive Officer
Heart Foundation

Contents

At the cutting edge: Improving outcomes for people experiencing cardiac arrest	3
Together we thrive: MyHeart MyLife online support community	4
Rocky Wrappers: Recognising 30 years of community support	6
Remote Laundries: A simple way to help tackle a complex disease	7
Maureen's legacy: Inspires generosity	8

Australia Day honours: Heart Foundation-funded researchers recognised for their lifesaving work

We are delighted to share that three of our talented funded researchers were awarded Australia Day honours earlier this year.

Professor Barbora de Courten, Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

For her outstanding service to medical research and healthcare, Professor Barbora de Courten was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. As a current Heart Foundation Vanguard Grant recipient, Professor de Courten's ongoing research project, 'Gro-AUS', focuses on a personalised, behaviour-change digital health program aimed at improving heart health. She also held a Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship from 2016-2019.

"Thank you to the donors who make this research possible. With your support, I hope to improve the delivery of lifestyle programs for the prevention and management of cardiovascular disease."

Associate Professor Hayley Christian, Member of the Order of Australia (AM)

Recognised for her significant service to children's health through policy development and research, Associate Professor Hayley Christian has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia. As a Heart Foundation-funded Future Leader Fellow, her research focuses on early intervention in key environments like the home, and in early childhood education centres, to establish a robust foundation for lifelong heart health.

Professor Gail Garvey, Member of the Order of Australia (AM)

Acknowledged for her significant service to Indigenous health and cancer research, Professor Gail Garvey, a proud Kamilaroi woman, has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia. As a recipient of a Heart Foundation Strategic Grant, Professor Garvey's research is dedicated to improving the heart health of First Nations people with cancer.

We congratulate all the Heart Foundation supporters and stakeholders who were awarded Australia Day honours this year.

Your generous donations have contributed to these remarkable achievements, and we are immensely grateful for your ongoing support of the Heart Foundation's vision. Together, we are taking significant steps towards an Australia free of heart disease.



SUPPORTING HEARTS

At the cutting edge:

Improving outcomes for people experiencing cardiac arrest

Did you know only one in 10 people experiencing cardiac arrest in the community survive?¹

A cardiac arrest is when the heart suddenly stops beating, usually the result of an electrical problem with the heart. We know that early access to CPR and a defibrillator can double the chance of survival.² That's where GoodSAM comes in.

The GoodSAM app contains a database of GoodSAM responder volunteers. When someone calls Triple Zero (000) to report a cardiac arrest emergency, the app sends an alert to nearby responders who can give crucial CPR while an ambulance is on the way.

The GoodSAM app is currently available in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, and will be available in Tasmania later this year. You can find more information

about GoodSAM including how to register as a volunteer through the relevant Ambulance Service website.

In addition to innovations like the GoodSAM app, new treatments and technologies are needed to help ensure people experiencing cardiac arrest have the best possible outcomes. This means finding ways to improve care in the ambulance, in the hospital and at home after discharge.

Thanks to your generous support, the Heart Foundation is doing exactly that. We are funding several cardiac arrest research projects, from exploring ways to increase rates of successful defibrillation to raising public awareness of CPR.

"It's through the incredible support of our donors that we're able to discover innovative ways to help people who have had a cardiac arrest," says Simon Cowie, NSW General Manager at the Heart Foundation.



Scan the QR code to find out more about the Heart Foundation's funded research.

1. Haskins B, Nehme Z, Cameron PA, Smith K. Cardiac arrests in general practice clinics or witnessed by emergency medical services: a 20-year retrospective study. *Med J Aust.* 2021;215(5):222-227. doi:10.5694/mja2.51139

2. Paratz E, Page GJ, Jennings GLR. Defibrillator access across Australia: the first step in avoiding a chain of fatality. *Med J Aust.* 2023;219(4):146-148. doi:10.5694/mja2.52041



Heart-healthy eating habits

Heart-healthy eating plays an important role in both preventing and treating heart disease. We estimate half of cardiovascular disease cases could be prevented if everyone in Australia followed a heart-healthy eating pattern. Focus on the different foods you eat regularly, to improve your overall health.

Follow our 5-step heart-healthy eating pattern to help you achieve this balance.

Download our free heart-healthy recipes and books by visiting heartfoundation.org.au/recipes.



SUPPORTING HEARTS

Together we thrive: MyHeart MyLife online support community

Living with heart disease is a daily challenge for many Australians. The good news is that people facing this challenge are not alone. The Heart Foundation is committed to supporting Australians diagnosed with heart conditions to live healthier and happier lives.

Living with a heart condition presents more than a physical challenge; it encompasses mental wellbeing, quality of life, and a need for friendship and connection. Feeling alone can significantly impact health outcomes, leading to an increased risk of further heart problems and making it difficult to do things that keep you happy and healthy. It's also linked to higher healthcare use and lower participation in healthy behaviours like being physically active and following a heart-healthy eating pattern.

This is where peer support comes in. Connecting with others going through similar experiences and challenges

fosters a sense of belonging, reduces feelings of isolation and enhances motivation to live a heart-healthy lifestyle. The benefits of peer support are tangible, including improved wellbeing and a strong sense of empowerment to tackle heart health challenges.

With the help of our generous donors, the Heart Foundation has developed a comprehensive support system to provide people with the information and support needed to navigate their condition more effectively and improve their overall quality of life.

Central to this is the Heart Foundation's MyHeart MyLife community, one of Australia's largest virtual support communities for heart

disease. The MyHeart MyLife online community is designed to foster connections at all stages of a person's heart disease journey.

The objectives of our MyHeart MyLife online community are ambitious yet achievable. We are building Australia's largest virtual network for people living with heart conditions and their carers, providing vital social and emotional support. By fostering membership into the MyHeart MyLife community, we're not just connecting people, we're building a community of support, understanding, and shared growth.

Our approach to delivering this peer support is through an online platform, using closed Facebook groups to



offer free, accessible support across Australia. Our group provides a safe, supportive space for people to connect and share their experiences, giving a sense of validation to what they are going through. Our moderation team monitors the discussions and provides extra support and information ranging from expert health professional advice to wellbeing support.

We're already seeing the benefits - our members continue to express their gratitude in finding a community of fellow 'heart warriors' and they report feeling less alone in their 'battle'.

"Thank you everyone for your kind words and support! I am completely blown away by what everyone has gone through and the achievements we've made."

- Max, MyHeart MyLife community member.

The Heart Foundation launched a national campaign promoting the MyHeart MyLife online community in September 2023. The community has now grown to over 2,300 members and boasts a very strong engagement rate, with 82% of members participating actively in the group.

Your support can make a significant difference. Donations to the Heart Foundation go directly towards maintaining and expanding these critical services. Your donation can help expand these vital programs, ensuring that every person facing heart disease has access to the support, information, and community they need to improve their quality of life. By contributing, you're not just donating to a cause, you're giving hope, support, and a lifeline to those navigating the challenges of heart disease.

Benefits of our MyHeart MyLife community



Joining together people with lived experience of a heart condition, and their carers and family



Having a forum to share and feel less isolated in your experience with heart disease



Receiving and giving support to others who are on a similar journey



Feeling connected to other 'heart warriors' who understand what you're going through



Safe online group moderated by the Heart Foundation Healthcare Programs team

YOUR IMPACT

Recognising 30 years of community support

Thanks to Rocky Wrap, more than 50 dedicated volunteers have wrapped Christmas gifts over the past three decades – and raised an incredible \$316,000 for the Heart Foundation.

Heroes don't all wear capes. Sometimes they arrive bearing tape and ribbon – like Margaret Whitchurch and Karen Baker (pictured). Visit Stockland in Rockhampton in the lead up to Christmas and you'll find them hard at work wrapping gifts with their army of volunteers.

Over the last 30 years, Margaret, Karen and the Rocky Wrap team have run a gift-wrapping stand in the five weeks before Christmas. They've wrapped thousands of gifts – from engagement rings, TVs and dirt bikes to lumps of coal and laundry baskets. In the process, they've had fun, forged friendships, and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for vital heart research.

This wonderful annual community fundraiser started when Margaret volunteered for a heart research fundraising event in Rockhampton 30 years ago. When the original hosts retired, Margaret became the coordinator. She was joined by Karen ten years ago and, together with co-convenors Cheryl, Rhiannon and Catrina, they have made a substantial impact in supporting vital research into heart disease.

Their incredible achievements can be attributed to their passion for the work of the Heart Foundation, their wonderful team of 50+ committed volunteers who give up their weekends to wrap gifts, and the support of local

retailers – including Stockland in Rockhampton.

And they couldn't do it without the continued support of the Rockhampton community. Many of their customers donate more than required. Others bring the team coffee, water and chocolates as they walk past, or stop by to tell their stories about how heart disease has touched their lives.

While they have fun, there's a more serious purpose to Rocky Wrap – and Karen and Margaret are motivated by hearing the stories of people who have been impacted by life-saving heart research. And after 30 years of success and an amazing \$316,000 raised, they've no plans to stop.

***"It's incredibly important to us to continue. By volunteering our time for five weeks we can help make people aware of the need for funds for the Heart Foundation. We're inspired to keep going as any money we raise goes to a vital organisation to help fund life-saving research."* - Karen Baker**

We want to take this opportunity to thank Margaret, Karen and the whole Rocky Wrap team, from the bottom of our hearts. We are so grateful for their enduring commitment to improving the lives of people living with heart disease over the last 30 years.

HEART WEEK

6-12 May 2024

Keep your heart healthy this Heart Week

Heart Week is the national heart health awareness week held in May each year. It brings health professionals and the Australian public together to start a conversation about heart disease and the steps people can take to improve their heart health.

This Heart Week (6-12 May), we are encouraging all eligible Australians to book in for a Heart Health Check.

This 20-minute check-up with your GP will assess your personal risk of a heart attack or stroke in the next five years and identify the steps you can take to lower your risk.

Many people may not know their risk of developing heart disease, especially since you often can't feel risk factors like high blood pressure and cholesterol.

If you are aged 45 and over, 30 for First Nations peoples, or 35 if you have diabetes, and do not currently have heart disease, speak to your doctor about a Heart Health Check this Heart Week.



Scan the QR code to find out more and get involved.





FUTURE IMPACT

Remote Laundries: A simple way to help tackle a complex disease

Acute rheumatic fever is an illness caused by an abnormal immune reaction to a Strep A infection of the throat or skin. The illness can cause sore joints, fevers, rashes, uncontrollable jerky body movements and heart inflammation. Acute rheumatic fever can be prevented if the initial Strep A infection is diagnosed and treated early.

A severe episode of acute rheumatic fever, or recurrent episodes, can permanently damage the heart valves, causing a condition called rheumatic heart disease (RHD). RHD can lead to complications like heart failure and abnormal heart rhythms.

While RHD is entirely preventable and has been eradicated in many parts of the world, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experience some of the highest rates globally.

We know that basic hygiene measures including access to hot water, running showers and washing machines can help prevent RHD. Using the right detergent, hot water and hot drying cycles kills scabies, which in turn reduces the risk of Strep A-infected skin sores.

The Remote Laundries project, delivered by the Aboriginal Investment Group, gives local communities free access to washing machines and dryers. Each laundry is set up in a repurposed shipping container, fitted with large commercial washers and dryers.

In 2023, with the kind support from our donors, the Heart Foundation First Nations Heart Health team was able to visit the communities of Angurugu, Milyakburra and Barunga in the Northern Territory. The team delivered bespoke, culturally appropriate education to laundry staff, community members and Champions from the Champions4Change program (an advocacy and leadership program for people with lived experience of RHD). The educational yarning circles covered topics including skin health

and environmental factors that can increase the risk of RHD.

"Thanks to our generous supporters, we can continue to spread these important health messages to more remote communities," explains Le Smith, National Manager Population Health & Wellbeing at the Heart Foundation.

"By working together, we can start to imagine a future where RHD no longer exists in Australia."



For more information about acute rheumatic fever and RHD, scan here.



HIKING HEARTS

Hiking for healthy hearts with Coastrek

Since last year, the Heart Foundation has been the proud charity partner for Coastrek, Australia's most iconic charity hiking challenge.

Coastrek is so much more than just a challenging hike, it's an adventure that helps improve the lives of everyday Australians by building healthier and happier hearts.

For 15 years, Coastrek has been empowering women (and all Australians) to connect with nature through movement, all while fundraising to support a worthy cause. Last year, thousands of trekkers raised over \$4 million across five spectacular events for the Heart Foundation. The money raised will help fund life-changing heart research to give hope to so many hearts.

Taking part in Coastrek will not only help you look after

your own heart - it will give you the chance to support us in a different way.

What's involved in a Coastrek hike?



1. In teams of four, sign up to walk 20km, 30km, 35km or 50km.
2. Rally for support and raise funds for Australian hearts.
3. Complete Coastrek's 12-week training program to get ready for the big day.
4. Hike for healthy hearts, knowing you're looking after your own heart while helping to improve the heart health of all Australians.

If hiking isn't for you, you can make a difference by volunteering. We rely on the generosity of our supporters to volunteer and ensure trekkers have a safe and fun day.

Become a volunteer.



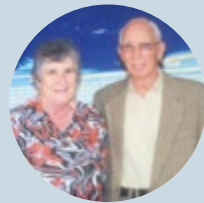
Exclusive offer just for you

As a token of our appreciation for being a Heart Foundation supporter, enjoy **25% off** your Coastrek registration! Simply use code **HFFTH24** when registering.

This offer is valid until close of event registration date. Refer to Coastrek event page. Ts&Cs apply.

YOUR IMPACT

Maureen's legacy



For Heart Foundation donor Maureen Stevenson, supporting research to improve heart health isn't just the right thing to do - it's personal.

Maureen Stevenson's story is one of resilience and her generosity over the years has had a profound impact on the Heart Foundation's research funding program. Her enduring commitment to heart health is clearly evident with her lifetime giving recently exceeding \$100,000. Maureen's ongoing support is spurred by personal experience and a deep-seated belief in the power of medical research.

Maureen's philanthropic journey began in 1981, after a life-altering car accident that left her and her husband, Barry, facing significant physical and emotional challenges. From then on, they gained a new perspective on life. It also ignited a strong desire to give back in a meaningful way. Due to her injuries, Maureen couldn't participate in traditional volunteer activities. So, she found her calling in philanthropy, dedicating her support to several charities, including the Heart Foundation.

Personal ties to heart health challenges underscore Maureen's relentless giving to the Heart Foundation. Her connection to the cause is influenced by her mother's experience with heart disease, resulting in a triple bypass in the 1980s. Witnessing the impact on her mother's life has fuelled Maureen's motivation to contribute to heart health research and to see advancements in treatment.

Her approach to giving is guided by the belief that her donations should be used where they're needed most, allowing the Heart Foundation to allocate funds effectively to areas of greatest impact. Maureen's story is a heartening example of transforming personal pain into a greater purpose. It shows the impact donors can have on advancing health outcomes.

Through her inspiring journey, Maureen embodies true philanthropy. Her legacy within the Heart Foundation sparks a culture of generosity, encouraging others to contribute to funding research with a real and lasting impact on heart health.

We are so grateful to Maureen for her dedicated support and recognise the difference an individual can make to our progress towards an Australia free of heart disease.