



Heart to Heart

featuring one member's heart health or peer support experience

Graeme Tulloch and *Hands on Heart Australia*

While riding his bike on a hot day in Mildura 10 years ago, Heartbeat Sunraysia member, Graeme Tulloch — former elite footballer, senior coach and school teacher — suffered a cardiac arrest.

Fortunately, several people came to his aid, called triple 000 and began CPR on him. Those administering CPR worked for eight minutes, applying hundreds of chest compressions before the ambulance arrived. Graeme was subsequently flown to Melbourne by air ambulance and transferred to St Vincent's where he was put in an induced coma for five days.

Graeme's life had been saved by the timely intervention of passing strangers. "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here today," says Graeme.

While he has little memory of the events of that day, that experience, and the passing of Shane Warne, became the catalyst for Graeme, and other supporters, including former school friend and author Phil Kettle, whose brother suffered a fatal cardiac arrest, to create the 'Hands on Heart' program that teaches emergency cardiopulmonary resuscitation – CPR.

Administered by the Mildura Lions Club, and supported by Angela Izard First Aid and local sponsors, *Hands on Heart Australia* is a community program that provides free CPR training to the community, with a strong focus on educating children.

As reported by the Heart Foundation, over 32,000 people in Australia have a cardiac arrest every year, only about 10% of people who have a cardiac arrest out of hospital survive, but when CPR is performed and an AED is used, survival rates can increase to 60-70%.

The primary goal of the *Hands on Heart Australia* program is to equip individuals with the skills and confidence to respond to cardiac emergencies and thereby improve survival rates for those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest across Mildura and surrounding areas.

Since its inception in May 2023, more than 1,665 people have been trained in the Sunraysia area. Twenty one schools have taken up the opportunity to be involved, mainly Year 6 students and many community groups have also undertaken the free CPR courses.



The program has received great financial support from businesses and individuals- over \$60,00 since June 2023, and the Mildura Health Fund is a major sponsor.

Graeme's goal is to have 2000 people trained in CPR in his local community in the next two years.

The initiative has also expanded to other parts of Australia through the Lions Club network, including, most recently, Cabarita Beach Pottsville Lions Club.

Further information can be found via

<https://www.handsonheartaustralia.com>

