

MEDIA RELEASE

KANGAROO ISLAND AUSTRALIA'S FIRST HEARTSAFE COMMUNITY

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Would you know what to do in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest?

Cardiac arrest (the heart stopping beating) has a small window of opportunity for treatment.

Survival drops by 10 per cent for every minute that goes by without effective CPR and defibrillation. In Australia, survival rates from cardiac arrest are around eight per cent - whereas in some countries survival rates of around 70 per cent are achieved.

Why is that?

The best chance at survival from a cardiac arrest is not due to big ticket items such as hospitals and helicopters, but instead goes to the core of community - the important first step on the 'chain of survival' relies on community members trained in CPR along with the availability of public access defibrillators 24/7.

The HEARTSafe communities project started in the USA, encouraging community members to train in CPR and ensuring the placement of defibrillators in key locations.

Over the last 18 months on Kangaroo Island, the volunteer team at HEARTSafe KI comprising Dr Tim Leeuwenburg and Trish Leeuwenburg along with Michael Berden, has trained over 600 community members in CPR and developed partnerships with community groups and small businesses to place defibrillators in townships and at key tourist locations.

Dr Leeuwenburg is proud of the community for embracing this project.

"Thanks to the efforts of Lions, CWA, Progress Associations and KI Council we now have public access defibrillators available across the Island," he said.

"Some tourism ventures, notably Dave and Leeza Irwin of Raptor Domain, have also supported the project as a small business, recognising that sudden cardiac arrest can affect tourists as well as locals."

Several other tourism businesses are looking at purchasing defibrillators, to mitigate against the risk of sudden cardiac death on-premises or when sightseeing.

"As a result, Kangaroo Island is Australia's first HEARTSafe community," Dr Leeuwenburg said. The next step is to circulate the locations of these 24/7 public access defibrillators, as shown on the map.

It is also wonderful to note that with the financial support of KI Council and the Office of the Commissioner for Kangaroo Island, HEARTSafe will also place this map in the forthcoming Kangaroo Island Visitors Guide.

HEARTSafe KI has also registered all Public Access Defibrillators with SA Ambulance Service and the GoodSAMapp, allowing 000 callers to be directed to their nearest 24/7 defibrillator.

Commissioner Wendy Campana and Kangaroo Island Mayor Peter Clements are pleased to support this project.

“Having a network of defibrillators and a trained community means that Kangaroo Island is now recognised as a HEARTSafe location, giving locals and visitors alike the best chance of survival, despite geographical isolation,” they said in a joint statement.

Kangaroo Island residents can attend HEARTSafe KI training sessions to learn CPR and how to use a defibrillator. For more information, contact the team at heartsafeki@internode.on.net or follow on social media - Twitter @heartsafeKI - Facebook facebook.com/heartsafeki



Pictured Leeza & Dave Irwin – Raptor Domain

This media release has been prepared with support from the Office of the Commissioner for Kangaroo Island.