

# Industry and clinical collaboration delivers screening pilot for heart wellness – yet more awareness and access needed to address Australia's biggest killer

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- One Australian dies of cardiovascular disease (CVD) every 12 minutes.<sup>1,2</sup>
- More proactive heart screening could help close a gap in our nation's health system.
- Australians encouraged to get a heart health check this World Heart Day, 29 September.

An extensive partnership collaboration led by Novartis Australia highlights the importance of proactive screening and heart health awareness for Australians on World Heart Day (29 September).

The pilot 'Gippsland Healthy Hearts' was designed to spearhead heart screening in nontraditional health environments for high-risk Australians, after data highlighted Gippsland in South-eastern Victoria as a region with one of the highest rates of cardiovascular disease (CVD) hospitalisations in the country<sup>3</sup>.

Whilst CVD still remains our nation's biggest killer overall<sup>1</sup>, Australians in regional areas are at twice the risk compared to metro centres<sup>3</sup> and have less access to testing and care. Experts are calling for more pharmacy led screenings in areas of high need which have proven to be valuable mechanism for delivering preventative health awareness for the community – as seen in the Gippsland pilot.

A unique collaboration by SiSu Health, Abbott, and Australian Pharmaceuticals Industries (API) provided 'while you wait' screening for Blood Pressure, Cholesterol (Total and LDL/HDL breakdowns) and cardiovascular risk factors assessment in retail locations such as shopping centres, led by registered pharmacists. Screening Australians where they habitually visit could be an effective approach to help tackle challenges with awareness, access and speed for those at high risk in the community, outside of a traditional health setting.

*"Healthy heart checks, including regular cholesterol checking, is a critical preventive step we can, and we must take now. As we tackle the growing health challenge of the nation, Novartis is committed to prevention strategies focused on significantly reducing heart health risk in the future. As the nation's biggest health priority, we strongly believe there is an opportunity to invest in preventing heart disease today, to avoid future impacts on the healthcare system tomorrow"* said Richard Tew, Country President, Novartis Australia.

In Australia, Cardiovascular disease has a significant impact – one in 4 of all deaths is caused by CVD<sup>1</sup> and one person dies from CVD every 12 minutes<sup>1,2</sup>. The Gippsland Healthy Hearts' pilot data and findings will be published by Monash University with a view to upscale the initiative nationally in popular retail locations across the country, in areas with high CVD hospitalisations.

"CVD is a leading cause of health expenditure in Australia. \$1.45 billion is spent on medications annually and \$15.5 billion is the cost to the economy after a person has experienced a heart attack. If we can develop better approaches to detecting the true level of risk in the community, we can implement better strategies to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis, heart attacks and stroke." Professor Steve Nicholls, Leading Cardiologist & Chief

Investigator Gippsland Healthy Hearts Study, Director Victorian Heart Institute, Monash University.

In 2020, Wellness Day was established by Novartis to motivate communities and workplaces to prioritise their health and undergo any necessary health checks which they may have neglected. This World Heart Day (29 September) Novartis continues to prompt Australians to get their heart health checked, as a proactive wellness initiative, to highlight the need for community engagement and commitment to check cardiovascular risk and support the prevention of heart disease in the future.

Visit <https://wellnessday.com.au/> for further information on Novartis' commitment to heart health checks.

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Background on Gippsland Healthy Hearts pilot<sup>4</sup> : 500 Gippsland residents were screened at locations including key employers and regional shopping centres. Preliminary findings suggested:

- 84% had at least one cardiovascular risk factor
  - 31% had hypertension
  - 70% were overweight or obese
  - 37% had high cholesterol
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## About Novartis

Novartis is improving the lives of more than 2.8 million patients across Australia and New Zealand through our medicines. By partnering with the healthcare system we are working for patients to address their pain-points, and we are committed to accelerating patient access to life saving treatments and associated healthcare.

We are reimagining medicine by using innovative science and technology to address challenging healthcare issues and our rich research pipeline has 200+ projects in development. We are transforming how clinical trials are run to increase patients' access to our industry-leading clinical trials footprint in Australia.

We continue to work on improving our environment for diversity, equity and inclusion and being a family friendly employer. Every day our inspired, curious, unbossed, and integrity-driven culture unites our people and encourages leadership at every level.

## References

1. Carrington MJ et al. CODE RED: Overturning Australia's cholesterol complacency. May 2020, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, Melbourne, Australia. Available online [Code Red: overturning Australia's cholesterol complacency \(baker.edu.au\)](https://www.baker.edu.au/code-red) [Accessed Sept 2022]
  2. Heart Foundation. Key Statistics: Cardiovascular Disease. Available from: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/bundles/for-professionals/key-stats-cardiovascular-disease> [Accessed Sept 2022]
  3. Australian Institute of Health & Welfare <https://aihw.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/205d333be95e46c38d4e2ed4a7493af> [Accessed Sept 2022]
  4. Monash Victorian Heart Institute, Monash University. Gippsland Health Hearts Study. Data on file 2022.
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