



Victorian Nurse Campaigns For Defibrillators To Be As Common As Fire Extinguishers

HuffPost Australia | By [Libby-Jane Charleston](#)

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Melbourne nurse Anne Holland and her five children were left devastated when her husband Paul died at the age of 56 of a sudden cardiac arrest at their home.

“He was fit and healthy and had just returned from his regular two hour Sunday bike ride,” Holland said.

Paul had gone upstairs after his bike ride and that’s where he tragically died -- it was 45 minutes before the family discovered him. In the years following her beloved husband's death, Holland has devoted her life to educating people about the importance of Automated External Defibrillators (AED) and campaigning to ensure every school and office has one.

“It was Paul’s death and my professional background in critical and coronary care that ignited the passion in me to make a difference. I initially started my business [Defib First](#) to raise awareness and educate about saving lives with AEDs but it became apparent that there was a need to supply the devices as well.”



Anne Holland is campaigning to have AEDs compulsory in the workplace. Picture: Anne Holland

Official figures show cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in Australia, surpassing all cancers and road fatalities combined. It is a cause of death where the victim’s survival largely depends on the actions of the people around them.

People should not assume that a person exhibiting certain symptoms is having a heart attack -- it could be cardiac arrest.

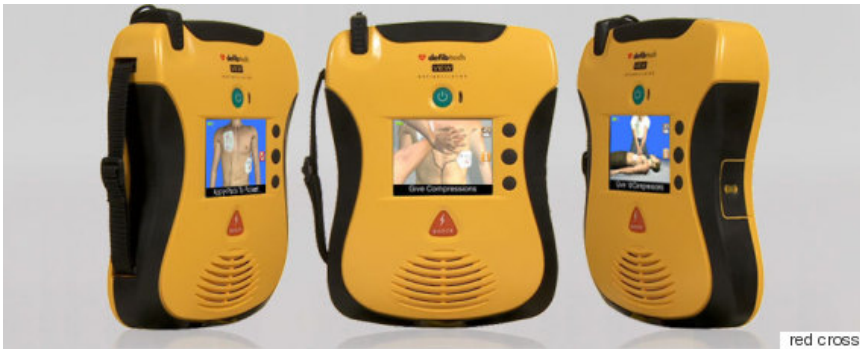
"I spend a significant amount of time in my training explaining why a cardiac arrest is not a heart attack, although it may be caused by a heart attack. There are many causes of cardiac arrest and the difference is that a cardiac arrest is fatal -- it is not possible to survive without defibrillation," Holland said.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics last year, 33,000 Australians died due to a sudden cardiac arrest, compared to 56 people who died in fires. While every school and office is required to have a fire extinguisher, it is not compulsory to have a defibrillator in either. An AED costs less than \$3,000.

Last year, the Victorian government \$2.7 million towards the purchase of defibrillators for local sports clubs. Sport Minister John Eren said the investment will save lives.

"More than a dozen Victorians suffer cardiac arrest every day. When cardiac arrest strikes, there isn't a second to waste. A person's chance of survival decreases 10 per cent every minute that passes without defibrillation," Eren said in a statement.

"Immediate CPR, easy access to equipment and a clear emergency plan is the key to making sure an emergency on the field doesn't become a tragedy."



Victoria said it is the only state to have allocated money for the life-saving equipment.

The Australian Red Cross kicked off a campaign in 2015 to have defibrillators accessible at schools, as well as sporting facilities. While an actual 'heart attack', where a diseased, narrowed or blocked artery disrupts blood flow to the heart is rare in children, a cardiac arrest is far more common.

Spokesman Anthony Cameron said a sudden cardiac arrest can happen anywhere and having a defibrillator on hand can dramatically boost survival rates.

"A cardiac arrest is when the heart is no longer beating. A cardiac arrest can occur in children due to drowning or choking, receiving an electric shock, respiratory related medical conditions such as asthma and anaphylaxis, trauma, poison or congenital abnormalities," Cameron said.

Red Cross Training Services [Project Defib](#) can provide schools and sporting clubs with a grant to help purchase and provide training for a Lifeline VIEW Defibrillator.



DefibFirst

Anne Holland's DefibFirst trains in the use of AED's in just one hour. Picture DefibFirst

Anyone using an AED should have no fear of being sued if they attempt and fail to resuscitate somebody. The Civil Liability Act protects 'Good Samaritans'. In fact, the law was put in place so that it would encourage people to help those in need without fear of being charged if the person they were assisting died while they were trying to help them.

A [Bondi Rescue](#) episode from 2014 shows a man coming out of the water with all the signs of having a heart attack. The risk that he might also go into cardiac arrest was high so the lifesavers applied the AED, which shocked him before he was revived.

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