

‘You just want these kids to have their best possible chance’



No need to worry: Caleb Cordes, 8, and his defibrillator. Picture: BILL MCAULEY

Broken hearts mended

AT least eight Victorian children are taking mini heart starters to school each day so they can be shocked back to life if they have a cardiac arrest.

The children, aged 8 to 14, are carrying the defibrillators as part of a new program run by the Royal Children's Hospital.

Doctors deem the devices necessary because the children, who have heart abnormalities, are at risk of sudden death.

Disturbingly, another 10 children, including a two-year-old boy, are on a waiting list for the expensive, but life-saving device.

Program co-ordinator Vanessa Connell shows teachers and staff how to use the \$4500 machines.

Ms Connell said it was depressing some families couldn't afford them.

"You want these kids to have their best possible chance," she said.

"For them, it really could mean the difference between life and death."

Caleb Cordes, 8, is one of RCH's heart-start kids.

Caleb packs his school bag and slings a mini defibrillator over his shoulder before heading off to Tullamarine Primary School each day.

He leaves the device in the principal's office.

Paula Beauchamp

health reporter

Staff have been trained to use the device in the event of a cardiac arrest.

Caleb, who was recently diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, said he was happy the machine allowed him to run around more.

"I don't need to worry as much now," he said.

Cardiomyopathy affects the structure and function of the heart.

Caleb also has ventricular arrhythmias, a fast heart rate that can trigger cardiac arrest. He was diagnosed at four.

Michelle Cordes, Caleb's mum, said her son's portable defibrillator gave her peace of mind when she dropped him at school each day.

"I have a lot of faith in the school," she said.

"It gives me confidence to know the defibrillator can revert Caleb back if anything goes wrong."

Mrs Cordes said hearing from Caleb's cardiologist that he needed the defibrillator "threw the family for six".

"It was the first time his life-threatening condition became real for me," she said.

"Hearing the machine could bring Caleb back to life brought home the reality he could arrest."

Some days the risks cross Mrs Cordes' mind, but mostly she tries not to worry. "You can't wrap him up in cotton wool," she said.

"It's important for Caleb to have quality of life."

Some days he asks his mum to carry the defibrillator into school instead.

"I guess he doesn't want to be different to the other kids," Mrs Cordes said.

She said she was grateful to Laerdal Pty Ltd and St John Ambulance.

The companies donated the Heartstart defibrillator and training sessions when they heard of Caleb's plight.

Philips Medical Systems also donated six machines, which will be distributed through the RCH's new program.

The defibrillators are used by children who have electrical disturbances in their heart beat, including kids with long QT and cardiomyopathy.

When a child arrests, the machine's paddles are placed on the child's chest to analyse the heart activity.

If the child needs a shock, the machine will speak and tell the operator to press a button, giving the child a jolt.

No time to chat

OPERA star Dame Kiri Te Kanawa declined a plan to tour with John Farnham because he talks too much on stage.

Farnham's manager, Glenn Wheatley, floated the idea with Dame Kiri this year, but she was concerned about fans throwing undies on stage.

"Kiri is obviously a dame, and I mean that with great respect. She is probably not used to an audience being so demon-



John Farnham



Kiri Te Kanawa

strative, and demands absolute silence when she works," Farnham said.

Dame Kiri also thought Farnham was too chatty

on stage. "There is truth in that," Farnham confirmed, laughing.

Full story in Hit Magazine

First dummy bidder cops fine

THE first Victorian to be prosecuted under new dummy bidding laws received a \$750 fine and a good behaviour bond yesterday.

Adam Post, of Berwick, who pleaded guilty to seven charges, was not convicted, but must pay \$1000 in court costs on top of the fine.

Melbourne Magistrates' Court heard Mr Post made seven dummy bids at the auction of his friend's house on February 28.

The 35-year-old accidentally made the winning bid, but refused to buy the Berwick property.

Consumer Affairs Victoria prosecutor Stephen Devlin told the court the vendors and the agent had no

Milanda Rout and Kamahl Cogdon

knowledge of the dummy bidding. The house was later sold for \$11,000 below Mr Post's winning bid.

Mr Devlin said Mr Post deserved a significant penalty because dummy bidding destroyed the honesty and integrity of the auction system.

But defence lawyer Tim Bourke said nobody had benefitted from Mr Post's actions and he had just made a stupid mistake. "He simply says he is a fool," Mr Bourke said. "And 'dummy' is the pertinent word in relation to dummy bidding."

The court heard Mr Post was diagnosed with clinical depression after the break-up of his marriage and was at a low point at the time of the auction.

Magistrate Jelena Popovic said Mr Post was misguidedly trying to help his friend and his actions were not callous.

Ms Popovic placed Mr Post on a 12-month good behaviour bond without conviction, fined him \$750 and ordered him to pay \$1091 costs.

Consumer Affairs Minister John Lenders hailed the result as a win for consumers and a warning to rogue operators in the market.

Flights Daily

fallscreen

Getting airborne in a Falls Creek terrain park is the only flying you need to experience amazing snow conditions this season. Enjoy some of the southern hemisphere's best freeriding close to home in Falls Creek's massive rail, pipe and terrain parks.

<p>Track to Trackers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Nights at Trackers Lodge • 3 Day Lift/Lesson/Rental <p>FROM \$521</p> <p><small>Per Person. Includes 3 breakfasts & Dinners. Date restrictions and conditions apply. Quote Code: TR03HS</small></p>	<p>Aurora Lodge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Nights at Aurora Lodge • 3 Day Lift/Lesson/Rental <p>FROM \$290</p> <p><small>Per Person. Includes 3 breakfasts. Date restrictions and conditions apply. Quote Code: AU01HS</small></p>
---	--

fallscreen.com.au/ski or 1800 45 35 25