



# Heart scare came without warning

**CATHY O'LEARY**

Peta Garnaut initially felt cheated when she had a heart attack last year at age 53.

As far as she was concerned, she was ticking most of the boxes for good health — eating well, exercising regularly and not smoking. She has a light aircraft pilot's licence.

After a morning gym session in May last year, Ms Garnaut realised all was not well. Initially feeling slightly nauseous, something told her not to drive home and within minutes she was struggling for breath and in great pain.

Staff called an ambulance that probably saved her life.

Doctors say many women have silent heart disease that often shows for the first time as a major, life-threatening event such as a heart attack or stroke. Heart disease is the biggest killer of Australian women, now claiming the lives of more than 10,000 a year, or four times the number of women who die of breast cancer.

The Heart Foundation is using the fundraising campaign Go Red for Women today to encourage more women to look at their risk factors and have a health check.

Cardiovascular health director Trevor Shilton said many people still thought of heart disease as an "old man's disease" and a recent survey showed that eight of 10 Australian women aged 30 to 65 did not know their risks.

"This is a real concern as women need to understand their heart health so they'll take positive steps to improve it," he said.

Ms Garnaut urged middle-aged women to be aware of any signs their hearts were not coping.



**Big shock: Peta Garnaut, 54, had a heart attack last year.** Picture: Astrid Volzke

"I felt I was doing most things right but now I know I need to do more and that means being even more careful about what I eat and keeping a close eye on my cholesterol," she said.

Fundraising merchandise is being sold at HBF branches today

and women can have a free heart health check in the Murray Street mall.

Ms Garnaut is launching her jewellery collection at Gadfly Gallery in Dalkeith tonight, with part of the sales going to the campaign.