



May 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

Exposing Australian Hidden Epidemic

Lyme disease patients and their supporters across Australia are holding awareness events that support a grass roots national action campaign. The May Lyme Project is organised and sponsored by the Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA).

Sharon Whiteman, the LDAA's President, said "awareness-raising is important because many people don't realise that Lyme disease can be contracted through a tick bite. Sadly many influential members of the Australian medical profession continue to deny the existence of this debilitating and life threatening illness," Whiteman said.

Health authorities say there is no evidence that Lyme disease can be contracted from a tick in Australia. They base their position on a 20 year old study of Australian ticks that failed to find the bacteria known to cause Lyme disease in America.

Sharon Whiteman disagrees with this position, "People are becoming seriously ill after a tick bite, while being denied proper medical treatment because a cause for our Lyme-like illness has not yet been 'officially' discovered in Australia."

"If treated early the chances of full recovery are good, but left untreated Lyme disease can totally destroy lives. The tragedy of our situation is that Lyme disease is treatable," Ms Whiteman said.

Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley, issued a formal advisory notice to Australian clinicians suggesting doctors should not rule out the possibility of Lyme disease as a diagnosis. He also highlighted the need for further research into Lyme disease and Lyme-like illness, however there have been no funds prioritised for this research, so many Australian patients continue to suffer without answers, diagnosis or effective treatment.

LDAA welcomes the ACT Health Minister Simon Corbell's recent statement in relation to Lyme disease that doctor's must use their best clinical judgement as to the cause of any illness and act accordingly.

"Patients who have been lucky enough to find a doctor to diagnose and treat Lyme disease are already getting better and some have been able to resume normal lives and contribute to society again."



Someone You Know Has Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease Association of Australia | www.lymedisease.org.au
Contact: lymedisease.org.au/contact-us | Facebook: [/LymeDiseaseAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/LymeDiseaseAustralia)



“This disease is not just costing individuals, it’s also taxing the Australian economy if people remain sick when they could be well with proper treatment,” Ms Whiteman said.

People interested in learning more about Lyme disease are invited to come along to the awareness event, where Lyme patients will be on hand to offer information and support.

National contact: **Media Officer, media@lymedisease.org.au**

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The national May Lyme Project event locations can be found via www.lymedisease.org.au/events .

Additional resources for media are available from the Lyme Disease Association of Australia’s website www.lymedisease.org.au/media.



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