



For Lyme Disease Awareness & Action

LYME DISEASE  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
ABN 46 417 706 647

May 2016

MEDIA RELEASE

## Lyme-like patients call on their local candidates for support

The Australian Lyme-like patient community join forces nationally each year to raise funds and awareness during the 'May Lyme Project'. Thousands of sick Australians are stuck in the great divide between their desperate reality and the denial of the health regulators and medical authorities. There is widespread agreement from government and medicos alike, that Australians are becoming sick after a tick bite. Even so they claim there is no acceptable evidence of the American strain of Lyme disease and use that to justify denying Australians treatment and respect. Given there has been no epidemiological investigation, and barely any scientific research into what is making Australian sick it is hardly surprising there is no scientific evidence.

In an emerging disease patients are the evidence. The Senate inquiry into Lyme-like illness sought evidence of this emerging disease and over 1000 patients responded. Patients have been delighted to see politicians from major and minor parties, and independents come together in awareness that something must be done to help. During the inquiry Victorian Senator John Madigan said, 'Australian Lyme patients are treated worse than Lepers', with Queensland Senator Claire Moore adding, 'But Lepers can get treatment.'

It was very difficult for the hundreds of patients who reflected on their journey with Lyme-like illness in order to present evidence to the inquiry. The Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) President Ms Sharon Whiteman says, 'The evidence outlined in the Senate Inquiry submissions from both sides of the divide demonstrates that what patients have been saying for years is true. They are discriminated against, denied diagnosis, treatment and care no matter where they contracted their Lyme-like illness. Hollow statements from the government and health authorities that insist patients can be treated in any emergency room or infectious disease specialist clinic, is simply not what patients experience. Lyme-like patients are routinely turned away from hospitals.'

Doctors are not trained and many feel intimidated by the stigma. The reality is that there are no government guidelines for doctors to manage the locally acquired disease nor an effective policy response. Patients hope to inform candidates and their local communities about this during the annual awareness and fundraising campaign. Ms Sharon Whiteman said, 'While it is difficult to believe our health system could fail so dismally, patient's stories are real. Candidates are moved to take action when they fully understand the situation. The May Lyme Project aims to keep the issues of Lyme-like illness in the forefront of politicians' minds during the upcoming busy election period.'

The LDAA asserts that the 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'. Ms Whiteman said, 'The silver lining in the over two decades of entrenched denial is that Australia has the opportunity to launch an urgent and comprehensive medical and scientific intervention into this epidemic. We have the opportunity to be showcased on the world stage with a patient focused public health response.'

Senator Madigan called for an interim Senate report prior to the election being announced so the new

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government could have a strong starting point and patients could have a stake in the ground. The report was released 4th May 2016 recommending the inquiry continue under the new government to be elected in July 2016. It also recommended education and awareness for the public and medical profession. Though this falls short of committing to immediate action to address the needs of patients, it contains crucial evidence that is now on the public record.

LDAA and patients are calling on local candidates to stand up for their vulnerable constituents and insist the newly elected government respond immediately and ensure real action is taken to address this travesty.

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

© I am willing to share my story of living with Lyme-like illness in Australia.

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Media contact: [media@lymedisease.org.au](mailto:media@lymedisease.org.au)

Additional resources for media are available from the Lyme Disease Association of Australia's [website](http://www.lymedisease.org.au/media)  
[www.lymedisease.org.au/media](http://www.lymedisease.org.au/media)

Senate Inquiry page:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/Lyme-like\\_Illness](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Lyme-like_Illness)