



LYME DISEASE
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
ABN 46 417 706 647

For Lyme Disease Awareness & Action

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MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Parliament support for chronically ill Lyme disease patients

Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) welcomes the Senator for Queensland Claire Moore's support for Lyme disease patients. Her Notice of Motion tabled today supports recognition that Lyme disease is a devastating disease and calls for the development of a national plan to treat people living with the disease.

Claire has been actively engaged with Lyme patients in Queensland for many years and recently had discussions with LDAA President Sharon Whiteman. This has given her a glimpse of the challenges they face trying to get help from the health system.

The current situation is untenable. The Health Departments have long denied that Lyme disease exists here. However, it seems highly implausible that Australia would be the only continent on the globe without Lyme disease.

The newly released Murdoch University research¹ found Lyme-like pathogens in Australian ticks. Other published research has done the same. The systemic denial of Lyme-like disease in Australia arose from a 1994 government funded research project that failed to detect *Borrelia burgdorferi* in Australian ticks.² What is particularly confounding is that the study reported that some bacteria was found but it was dismissed and no further scientific inquiry was made.

The term Lyme-like is often used to avoid the debate being distracted by which species of the bacteria causes Lyme disease. Some antagonists assert that the only species that causes Lyme disease is *Borrelia burgdorferi* - the common North American strain originally identified in Lyme Connecticut USA. The more substantive issue is that the genus *Borrelia* has hundreds of species and many of them make people very sick. Additionally, it is highly likely there may be a uniquely Australian species, so research, pathology tests and health policy that focuses on a few foreign species may not address the cause of the illness in Australia.

Further, arguments about which microscopic species of the bacteria are causing illness in Australia are not sufficient cause to justify waiting for policy that ameliorates patient's suffering and that could prevent new cases from degenerating to a chronic and potentially fatal state.

Thousands of Australians are getting sick after being bitten by a tick and thousands more remain misdiagnosed in the Australian medical system. If the federal and state governments fail to see Lyme-like illness as a priority the stress on the health system will only increase.

"Australians with Lyme-like illness get better with internationally recognised Lyme treatment. Lyme-like disease should be recognised as an emerging infectious disease so Australian patients can receive compassionate and effective world's best practice acute and chronic disease support," Sharon Whiteman said.

¹ <http://www.parasitesandvectors.com/content/8/1/345/abstract>

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2271457/>

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