



## Shadow Minister for Health and Medicare

12 May 2019

Ms Sharon Whiteman  
Chief Executive Officer  
Lyme Disease Association of Australia  
Via email

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me recently, and for your submission on improving the lives of Australians with Lyme-like illness.

As you and your members know all too well, the diagnosis of Lyme disease is disputed, causing significant stigma and distress for thousands of Australians.

Labor shares your conviction that these people deserve the best possible care and support, and that further research is needed on the causes of and possible treatments for Lyme-like illness in Australia.

Labor welcomes the current Government's investment in research into Lyme-like illness and will deliver this funding if elected. However, we understand your disappointment that the Liberals have failed to fund a project to investigate the source and pathology of tick-borne illness in Australia.

That's why a Shorten Labor Government will meet your request to invest \$2.8 million in an integrated research platform for early diagnosis and personalised treatment for affected Australians.

As you know, this research will establish the first large-scale and longitudinal biobank for patients suffering from Lyme-like illness. This will aim to identify biomarkers for diagnostic and prognostic purposes, as well as potentially allowing the development and delivery of personalised treatments.

Labor knows that many patients experience debilitating symptoms, and that their suffering is exacerbated by the poor understanding of their condition. This makes accurate diagnosis and adequate treatment difficult to come by.

Labor hopes that this investment will lead to more certainty on the causes and symptoms of Lyme-like illness, as well as cutting-edge treatments – bringing relief to people who are suffering around Australia.

This investment will build on Labor's record in this space.

As you would be aware, the last Labor Government established the Clinical Advisory Committee on Lyme Disease.

Labor appointed patient advocates as well as general practitioners, pathologists and other health professionals to the Committee. Our hope was that the Committee's composition would bring people together and help address the uncertainty surrounding Lyme-like disease.

We tasked the Committee with advising governments on how to disseminate information about Lyme disease, as well as the most appropriate treatments and requirements for further research.

Unfortunately, the Committee was abolished by the Liberals in 2014 – meaning Australia is five years behind where it might have been on Lyme-like illness.

Labor subsequently participated in the Senate Inquiry into Lyme-like illness, and encouraged the current Government to respond to its recommendations. The Government's response acknowledged the need for more education and research in this field.

But patients have called for further innovative thinking and leadership – which Labor will deliver through this investment.

Thank you again for your submission and for your advocacy. If elected, I look forward to working with you to implement this commitment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine King