

MEDIA RELEASE

– Lyme Support Program – When Lyme gets too big, get help

The Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) has been advocating for sufferers of Lyme Disease for 10 years this month. With this anniversary, the LDAA is excited to announce the Lyme Support program which has been funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.

The program is the first of its kind in Australia and will support people with Lyme disease and help them address the unique challenges they face.

As well as the multitude of debilitating symptoms they suffer, people with Lyme disease also face challenges that commonly lead to feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Doctors who understand the illness are extremely difficult to access, patients often face stigmatisation and discrimination, and the cost of the disease can lead to a heavy financial burden.

Many people find it difficult to cope but feel they have nowhere to turn. Far too many contemplate suicide. Since 2010, 23% of people who have died from Lyme disease have tragically taken their own life. It is vitally important that people who are struggling with Lyme disease connect with the right people who understand their illness.

The Lyme Support program has been designed by the LDAA with the aid of healthcare professionals who recognise the desperate need for better crisis support services for these vulnerable individuals. The program will provide Lyme disease sufferers with support in crisis situations.

Support services are provided by a trained support team of people with a lived experience and a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenge patients face. Patients will be able to access online or community support, with those most in need targeted for additional crisis counselling or professional and independent patient advocacy services.

The program is a pilot and will run from November 2019 to June 2020, with potential improvements guided by participant feedback. Data collected during the program will provide valuable information about what Australian Lyme patients need most and will help assess the feasibility of expanding the program in 2020.

Support services like this are a step forward for Australians suffering from Lyme disease and will make a marked difference to the wellbeing of many people, including their family, friends and carers. However, significant changes are still required within the Australian medical system to acknowledge the growing problem of tick-borne illness and provide appropriate levels of research funding to lessen our knowledge gap about tick-borne illness in Australia. A widespread prevention message is also needed to stem the flow of Australians affected by tick-borne illness.

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Additional resources for media are available from the Lyme Disease Association of Australia's website [here](#).

The Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) commenced operations in 2009. Since that time, we have evolved into a powerful organisation with the assistance of many volunteers who are passionate about awareness and education, and ultimately eradication of the illness, which can be debilitating, life changing, and in some cases deadly. To learn more about symptoms, please visit [this page](#), and if you are concerned about your health and would like support please [contact us](#).