

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**Tanya Dupagne, former**  
**Australian Rural Woman of the Year**  
**demands action for Australian Lyme patients**

The Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) has appointed former Australian Rural Woman of the Year Tanya Dupagne as an Ambassador for the organisation.

Bitten by ticks while working at a summer camp in the US in 2005, Tanya started noticing medical issues in 2013. She was officially diagnosed with Lyme disease in November 2019 after seven years of seeking answers from Australian medical professionals and numerous specialists.

“Living with Lyme disease is like living in a nightmare – only in a nightmare you wake up at the end of it. With Lyme, you don’t wake up from it, it’s there every minute of every day,” Tanya said.

“I am honoured to be an ambassador for the LDAA, because it will enable me to help them in their mission to raise awareness of this debilitating illness, and advocate for change.” The LDAA is Australia’s peak patient body. It is committed to achieving multi-sector recognition and world’s best practice diagnosis and treatment for Australian’s with Lyme and associated illnesses.

LDAA estimates that nearly 500,000 Australians could be suffering from an illness that resembles Lyme disease. Yet Australians find it difficult to obtain a reliable diagnosis with an average time for diagnosis being 10 years. These delays impede patient’s options for a full recovery.

In Tanya’s case, not only was she infected with Lyme disease, she also contracted a serious number of co-infections leaving her seriously debilitated. “When I was first diagnosed, it was a relief because I finally had a name for what had been making me so sick. The relief soon turned to disbelief when I realised that Lyme disease is not recognised in Australia; that medical practitioners are not only uneducated on it but discouraged from diagnosing and treating it and can face repercussions if they do; and that there is no patient support provided at Government level,” Tanya said.

“I have a known tick bite from a Lyme disease endemic area in the USA. I have positive blood tests for *borrelia* and a suite of co-infections from reputable labs both in Australia and overseas. I have an MRI scan that is consistent with Lyme. I have had Lyme symptoms for years, which are progressing. Yet because I got the ‘wrong’ disease, like so many others, I am unable to get medical support in my own country.”

“A senate inquiry into Lyme disease was held in 2016, with many recommendations made. It is now three years on from this inquiry and patients are yet to see any change. I am hoping my role as an LDAA ambassador will help Australian patients get the support they require. We need help now – not in 5 years’ time or 10 years’ time, now.”



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“While we are never happy to learn another Australian discovers they have Lyme disease, we are proud to partner with Tanya for the betterment of the situation for every Australian sick with this debilitating disease” Ms Whiteman, LDAA CEO says. “Tanya is absolutely accurate, there is indisputable evidence on record in the Senate Inquiry submissions and public hearings. The call to action from the Senate in 2016 was ‘Patients First’, yet three years later the situation is more dire for patients. Tanya has a proven track record in taking action for others and we’re grateful for her partnership with us.”

### **ABOUT TANYA DUPAGNE (HonDUniv ECowan, CF, BA Comm)**

Tanya has spent the past 15 years running camp and youth activity programs for over 130,000 children and young people throughout the world and her programs have been recognised at State, National and International level.

Growing up in Kwinana, WA, she started a number of community programs with a focus on children at risk and those affected by trauma and torture situations. In 2009 she was the youngest ever female Councillor elected to the City of Kwinana Council and was GM/CEO of a charity for children affected by domestic violence for 2 years. Following that, she moved to the WA Wheatbelt to start the Camp Kulin program, which works with children and women from over 300 towns across WA.

Tanya was the recipient of a Churchill Fellowship that enabled her to travel to America to work alongside the top programs aimed at stopping generational cycles of domestic violence. In 2019 she was named as a Westpac Social Change Fellow, which recognises Australia's top social innovators. She was able to return to America to spend time learning from some of the best summer camps in the world and undertake leadership and mentoring training at Harvard University.

Tanya was the 2017 Australian and Western Australian Rural Woman of the Year, and in 2019 was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Edith Cowan University for her contribution to children and women throughout the world. She won the Constable Care Child Safety Awards, WA Children's Awards and Premiers Active Citizenship Award, and was one of 5 Australians named on the Power 30 Under 30 list for Australasia. She was named as one of Australia's 100 most influential women by the Australian Financial Review, one of WA's 50 Rising Stars by the West Australian Newspaper, one of the National Rural Women's Coalition's Inspiring Women and one of Country Style Magazine's Top 30 people in Regional Australia.

**Media spokesperson:** Sharon Whiteman | CEO | 0411 244 484

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](#).*