

Age 67

Submission into:

Access to diagnosis and treatment for people in
Australia with tick-borne diseases”

I am 67 years young and have travelled and worked extensively in Australia, particularly in the tropics, but have never left the country.

In 1994 I was diagnosed with Ross River fever.

During 1998 I conducted 4WD tours on Cape York and developed a severe rash on my body which was very itchy but did not stop me working. Migraine headaches started shortly after.

In 2002 my marriage ended suddenly. I experienced a neurologic meltdown suffering acute anxiety, panic attacks, memory problems, insomnia and I could not tolerate loud noises.

2004 was a roller coaster year raising two boys on my own and continuing to work as a diesel mechanic. I continued to have these neurologic meltdowns into 2005 thru to 2008.

I was self-employed specializing in mining and construction equipment maintenance and repair, working 12 to 14 hour days, 7 days a week for 8-10 weeks at a time, then taking breaks to Cairns, North Queensland.

In 2010 near Coen on Cape York, I was sitting on the verandah of a homestead when a blood engorged tick fell from my body onto the concrete floor. The Queensland and the Northern Territory governments have posted warnings on the internet about this.

About a week later a round, raised, very itchy, red rash appeared on my right upper forearm. I consulted a GP who said that I had been bitten by something and advised applying Savlon and to drink water.

From then on I started to experience further symptoms of depression, anxiety, panic, and fatigue. I started to deteriorate from 2010, by August 2013 I had to cease work and close my business.

During that time I consulted several doctors who suggested meditation, drinking plenty of water, and that it was all in my head.

I contacted a doctor in Qld. who expressed much concern. Through clinical diagnosis he suspected Borellia and the co-infection, Babesia. I was started on an antibiotic protocol for 12 months duration. However this had no effect and did not improve my condition in any way.

Another doctor I consulted, although not informed, was very interested to hear my story, but not willing to record anything about Lyme on my file. She referred me to a Microbiology and Infectious disease specialist at the Austin Hospital, Melbourne.

The week prior to the appointment the specialist telephoned me at home and asked what I was expecting from the consultation. I replied I was expecting testing, diagnosis and maybe treatment. The specialist remarked that Lyme was a very contentious issue and hesitantly said he would see me the following week.

At the consultation, the specialist wrote a pathology request for tests at the Rickettsia laboratory in Geelong, but only ordered part of the necessary pathology tests to diagnose Borrelia.

Later, the referring GP advised me that the specialist had contacted her after the consultation and said he could not diagnose me with Lyme or he would become a "*stay at home doctor*".

In November 2014 I took myself to the Bendigo hospital with chest pains however the doctor was unable to find anything wrong. When I mentioned Lyme, he declared that "Lyme disease does not exist in Australia, and you were diagnosed by a doctor who is struck off"! I was administered 2 Panadol and sent home.

I am currently taking 6 blood pressure tablets, Valium and Paxam 2 (Clonazepam) daily. Other treatments include Naturopathic remedies, Rife machine and magnetic coil frequency treatment.

The severest of symptoms are confined to my head and brain. I experience acute cognitive dysfunction, radial head pain, severe brain discomfort, facial bone pain, severe migraines and a sensation of something crawling under the skin of my forehead.

I am unable to work, socialize or enjoy family functions.

In my search for better health, I estimate that I would have spent around \$30,000 on consultations with doctors, medications and other associated items, (eg: Rife machine) not to include approx. \$1,000,000 in lost income, superannuation contributions and thus non-payment of Government income taxes. I have received a

part payment of the Centrelink Disability Pension but now move to an aged pension as I turned 67 this past November.

On a trip to Cairns in July 2013, my accompanying friend received a bite on her right thigh which later came up as a very itchy perfect bullseye rash. On her return to Bendigo she consulted her GP who confirmed it was a tick bite and placed her on a 2 week course of antibiotics, she returned to the doctor to request a longer 6 week period of treatment as recommended on Lyme web sites, the doctor was obliging. To this date she has not experienced any problems.

I feel that the scenario of Lyme disease alone is far too narrow and would like to see authorities broaden their investigations into Lyme and other bacterial diseases like Babesia, Bartonella, Mycoplasma and other conditions associated with host vectors.

Our doctors need to be educated in the clinical diagnoses of Borellia/Lyme-like illnesses, and feel able to treat their patients without fear of recrimination.

National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited pathology agencies need to be established to accurately test for the disease/s.

We need Government Public awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers of tick bites.

In the meantime I continue alone unable to find suitable medical treatment, while coping with my deteriorating health.

My fight goes on!