



Australian Government

Ministerial Statement

Australian Government response to the
Senate Community Affairs References Committee final report: *Inquiry into the growing evidence of an emerging tick-borne disease that causes a Lyme-like illness for many Australian patients*

[The Australian Government response addresses the recommendations from the senate inquiry's final report.](#)

I recognise, and to be clear, I appreciate and understand that there are many Australians who are experiencing very real ill health, hardship and pain either themselves or for a family member or close friend.

In the first days of becoming Minister for Health, I approached the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Brendan Murphy and explained my concern for patients who said they had Lyme disease or a similar type of illness.

I am also conscious that many Australians have had a difficult time navigating the medical system and accessing appropriate treatments. I acknowledge that many Australians are experiencing real symptoms and the cause needs to be worked out. I am not ignoring this problem and that is why state and territory health authorities, the Australian Medical Association, representatives from the relevant medical colleges, along with patient groups, will be invited and encouraged to participate in a forum that I am convening and attending. All parties will contribute to the development of a framework for patient-centred multidisciplinary care teams. In addition to developing such a framework, there needs to be education and awareness training for all healthcare professionals.

Furthermore, I have identified with the Chief Executive Officer of the National Health and Medical Research Council, Professor Anne Kelso, my concern for patients and I am pleased that \$3 million can be made available for a targeted call for research into “Debilitating Symptom Complexes Attributed to Ticks”.

My department advises that we must remain open minded when it comes to causes of these symptoms and that is why it is important we adopt a recommendation of the senate inquiry and stop using the words *Lyme disease* and *Lyme disease-like illness*. Without knowing the causes of the symptom complexes, we are being descriptive in our acknowledgement of debilitating symptom complexes attributed to ticks.

From the patient submissions to the senate inquiry, I understand many patients have mentioned contact with ticks, but a large proportion of them did not or could not remember a tick bite. This descriptive name acknowledges the relevance of tick bites as well as recognising the bulk of people affected suffer from debilitating fatigue, brain fog and other incapacitating symptoms.

In addition to the research dollars, I will take this matter to the Council of Australian Government's Health Council and take a leading role in ensuring state and territory Health Ministers understand we have a national obligation to help Australians with debilitating symptom complexes attributed to ticks.

The Hon. Greg Hunt, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Sport