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Dear Ms Radcliffe

**Re: Inquiry into growing evidence of an emerging tick-borne disease that causes a Lyme like illness for many Australian patients**

Thank you for your letter dated 23 November in regards to Ms Janice Foster's submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee. I appreciate your notification of these claims and the opportunity to respond to them.

Doctors diagnose and treat patients using the best evidence available to them, which is facilitated by good, developed judgement. Lyme disease in Australia is not presently accepted by the medical community because there is no evidence to support the existence of *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Borrelia) in Australia. We acknowledge that Lyme disease exists in Australia from people who have caught the disease in overseas areas endemic to the bacteria. We understand that the absence of a conclusive aetiology of an indigenous Australian vector for Lyme disease, or a Lyme-like disease can be frustrating for patients when their illness is not easily diagnosed or treated.

The absence of evidence however does not mean we are denying that patients with Lyme-like illness experience chronic symptoms, and the AMA therefore calls for more research on the underlying cause. Ticks contain a large range of microbiota that can cause disease, and there are a range of conditions that express the same symptoms as patients with a Lyme-like illness.

One comment that was overlooked but worth noting is the media release from AMA WA, of which I was then the President, where I express my sympathy for patients with a Lyme-like illness:

*Patients with Lyme-like illnesses deserve our sympathy, and they deserve appropriate investigation and treatment. What they don't need is an implausible diagnosis in the majority of cases, and months of expensive antibiotic treatment for an infection that they have tested negative for. All patients deserve respect and appropriate investigation for the source of their symptoms.<sup>1</sup>*

It is evident from this that the AMA has not attempted to "skew the focus of the message", but simply to identify future steps required to determine the cause of these patients' symptoms in order to develop appropriate treatment. The AMA continues to share concerns about the presence of Lyme-like illness in Australia and sympathise with people who are experiencing a chronic illness.

Thank you again for notification on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Michael Gannon  
President  
28 November 2016

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.amawa.com.au/senate-inquiry-into-lyme-disease-a-waste-of-time-and-resources-ama-wa/>