

CWA of NSW Awareness Week 6 - 13 September 2014



Media Release

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Recognise Lyme disease in Australia: CWA of NSW Awareness Week 2014

The Country Women's Association (CWA) of NSW is calling on politicians and decision makers in the health sector to urgently investigate the contraction of Lyme disease in Australia as the focus of this year's CWA Awareness Week.

"As we celebrate our Awareness Week this year, we are reminding our communities and leaders that the CWA is much more than just tea and scones," said Tanya Cameron, President of the CWA of NSW. "We are interested in a diverse range of issues that affect rural women and their families, and our members are telling us that Lyme disease is a concern for them."

"We believe that Lyme disease needs to be recognised as a legitimate medical condition and that we need acknowledgment that this disease can be contracted in Australia," said Tanya. "We are communicating with the federal Minister for Health on this subject and will be bringing up this issue with our local politicians as well."

Lyme disease is an infection caused by bacteria (spirochete) that infects humans from the bite of ticks which are infected with the bacteria. Some doctors believe that Lyme disease does not exist in Australia and that anyone who has contracted Lyme disease must have travelled overseas to contract the disease in more endemic areas (such as the USA and Europe).¹

People working outdoors have a higher risk of contracting this disease so a better understanding of this illness is especially important for rural and regional families.

¹ Lyme Disease Association of Australia, <http://www.lymedisease.org.au>

As CWA spokesperson for health issues, Vice President Lois Stalley is one of the women responsible for bringing this issue to the attention of the CWA members across the state.

“One of the goals of the CWA is to draw attention to shortfalls in medical services available to local communities,” said Lois.

“The issue of Lyme disease has been an area of concern for our community in recent years and our branch has been approached by people affected by the illness who are looking for assistance. In order to ensure patients receive the correct diagnosis and treatment, the existence of this disease must be recognised.”

The CWA of NSW is calling for continued research into tick-borne disease and will continue to liaise with local and state politicians and other experts to ensure the issue is addressed.

“We are asking for our leaders to consider Lyme disease seriously and to work rapidly to address the needs of the Australians suffering from this disease,” said Tanya.

This year the CWA of NSW celebrates its 92nd year of making a difference in the lives of rural families. The issues the organisation has addressed over this time are diverse and extensive from health and education to environmental and agricultural and more.

“The CWA has always been about much more than social activities and local fundraising and Awareness Week is a good opportunity for us to tell the community about the real work of the CWA in NSW,” said Tanya.

Every year the CWA of NSW raises money, makes donations and lobbies to improve the lives of regional and rural women and families. In 2014 alone the CWA of NSW has donated more than \$120,000 to disaster relief, provided 59 education grants to rural students and lobbied the government to ban the sale of energy drinks to minors.

Awareness Week 2014 runs from 6 September to 13 September 2014 and CWA branches all over NSW will celebrate with both fun events and serious calls to action on important issues.

Ends

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