Kate Wood's Speech – Worldwide Lyme Protest – Sydney Event: May 10th 2013

Lyme disease is very close our hearts as both my husband and I have it. I have been a very healthy and active person my whole life, so have found my Lyme journey, in particular the last 8 months, very challenging both personally and professionally. Our healing journey has led us through many obstacles, and opened our eyes to a whole new world of people suffering. We are motivated to help ourselves and with this comes a new passion to share our knowledge and expertise with our fellow healthcare professionals and with you - fellow Lyme sufferers.

We have started Lyme Disease Support Workshops once a fortnight at our Mona Vale clinic, where Lyme sufferers and their support network can come to be supported emotionally with people who understand what they are going through, and by our Lyme literate practitioners who provide free talks and treatments to support your healing.

I'm not big on crowds when I'm at my best, so to think about talking in a protest like today, is a big step for me. It's a step I have taken because we have to be heard and get Lyme disease recognised, so people can be diagnosed and treated efficiently and effectively.
We live in a country where equal rights are promoted. What about the rights of Australians to be diagnosed and treated properly for Lyme Disease?
Every day I get emails from people, saying that after they read articles I have written, they have visited their local GP who totally ignored them, or worse, ridiculed them.
Just recently, I spoke with an 82 year old lady who asked her GP to test her for Lyme disease and he marched her out the front door and told her never to come back. This appalls me, as my journey has been very hard, even though I have been lucky enough to have the support of a wonderful GP, a great family network, an unbelievable team of health professionals helping me every step of the way with treatment, and unwavering support and love from my husband.

My hat goes off to anyone out there who is running this road alone. I want you to know that you aren't alone and with every ounce of energy that I have left I will continue to push the boundaries, ask questions that need to be asked, and use my 6 clinics as havens and support centres for each and every one of you should you need that.

There is a lot of money pumped into research and treatment of health issues such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. While these diseases are devastating and should absolutely have funding, did you know that each of these can have huge lifestyle factors involved? Often these health concerns could be prevented with simple lifestyle changes.

Lyme disease is NOT discriminatory and it is a global problem - did you know ticks have been found on every continent in the world?

Yes, you could avoid known tick-infested areas, protect yourself when in bushy areas with repellants, and wearing long light clothing and know how to quickly and safely remove a tick once attached, but that is as close as it goes to preventing Lyme disease.

Look at me - I grew up in north west NSW where I got a tick bite at age 16 in an area where ticks supposedly don't exist, let alone with Lyme disease. Unlucky? Maybe.... but it seems then there are a lot of "unlucky" people in Australia. If Lyme disease were to be recognised as a "notifiable" disease, then the chance of people being diagnosed in the acute phase would increase and therefore prevent a lot of needless suffering.

Lyme disease is being predicted as the biggest epidemic of the 21st century. Why is no one listening? Why is there ignorance? Why do people have to suffer needlessly?
Everyone has a voice. A single voice can be hard to hear, but many voices start to make a impact. I hope we don't have to wait until someone in the Government or high up with a more prominent voice to be affected by Lyme disease, before important issues are addressed and changes implemented?

What if it was you or your mum or your child that had fatigue so extreme that they couldn't get out of bed, or walk, or talk, or eat without assistance? Or even died? Would that then change your voice on this matter? The power of one person to join many and make one big change is possible. That is what each and every one of you are doing today so thank you.
Lyme disease, as each of you know, is not just a physical and emotional journey, but also a huge financial burden. Please involve your family and friends in your journey so they can help you and your fellow Lymies.

Please be generous in donating to charities such as the Karl McManus Foundation and Lyme Disease Association of Australia, so that precious research can continue in order to support our cause. If people want to help, get them to run a fundraiser for one of these great charities as this indirectly helps everyone. The sooner we get Lyme disease recognised in Australia, the sooner we can live the life we were meant to live - a long happy, quality one.

If Lyme disease is not recognised then at some stage EVERYONE will be affected either directly or indirectly. Without recognition in Australia, doctors won't get the training they need to diagnose and treat Lyme disease, and patients will continue to struggle to afford treatment.
And if preliminary research is correct then Lyme Disease will become an epidemic as it will spread via sexual contact, placenta and even saliva. Help us help everyone.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing the future Lyme-free.
Peace be with you all.