From a spokesperson for the Federal Dept of Health

The conclusive finding of the bacterial species that could cause a Lyme Disease-like syndrome in Australia has yet to be made. Such a finding would put beyond doubt the existence of Lyme Disease, or a Lyme disease-like syndrome in Australia.

In the meantime, laboratory tests are used to see if patients are showing an immune response to the bacteria that could cause this infection. There are different approaches used by different laboratories in this process which leads to different diagnoses for the same patients. We are working to see if these approaches can be harmonised.

While the diagnostic uncertainty across the medical community is not ideal, the continued search for evidence for a causative organism is the only way that this uncertainty can be resolved.

In the meantime doctors must always use their best clinical judgement as to the cause of any illness their patients may be experiencing and act accordingly.

We have received 24 submissions regarding the "Scoping Study to develop a research project(s) to investigate the presence or absence of Lyme Disease in Australia" along with eight expressions of support for the Lyme Disease Association of Australia's submission and four letters from people describing their personal situations. The Study (available at http://www.health.gov.au/lyme-disease) was undertaken because there is so much debate regarding the presence of a Lyme disease-like syndrome in Australia.

Certainly there are quite a number of people in Australia who have been diagnosed with the disease by their treating doctors. Some of these patients have been ill for a long period of time and their therapy is complex and demanding. It is important for these people in particular that we find out as much about the disease as we can.

The submissions on the Scoping Study were discussed with the Chief Medical Officer's Clinical Advisory Committee on Lyme Disease in July 2014. The committee of representatives drawn from a range of professional organisations and advocacy groups met for the last time on 15 July. While the committee has been dissolved, the members will still be consulted regularly by the department as it continues its work to progress the former committee's terms of reference.

The department's interest in an Australian Lyme disease-like syndrome will be maintained. The Department of Health will continue to:
- consult with members who made up the CACLD
- monitor progress made in research, for example, the department continues to seek updates on the work currently funded by 1. the Australian Research Council and being carried out by Murdoch University which involves dogs as sentinels and is also looking at human specimens and 2. the University of Sydney's Tick Borne Diseases Unit.
- act as a point of contact within Australian Government for the Lyme disease community including medical practitioners and state and territory health authorities
- work on the diagnostic pathway with relevant stakeholders (including laboratory collaboration) and will inform patient groups of progress
- seek advice from international partners, and
- write to patient groups and medical practitioners to update them on Lyme disease progress.