



**Australian Government**  
**Repatriation Medical Authority**

**Statement of Principles**  
**concerning**  
**LYME DISEASE/LYME BORRELIOSIS**  
**(Balance of Probabilities)**  
**(No. 18 of 2025)**

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The Repatriation Medical Authority determines the following Statement of Principles under subsection 196B(3) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

Dated 17 December 2024.

Professor Terence Campbell AM  
Chairperson  
by and on behalf of  
The Repatriation Medical Authority

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## 1 Name

This is the Statement of Principles concerning Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis (*Balance of Probabilities*) (No. 18 of 2025).

## 2 Commencement

This instrument commences on 28 January 2025.

## 3 Authority

This instrument is made under subsection 196B(3) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

## 4 Repeal

The Statement of Principles concerning Lyme disease (Balance of Probabilities) (No. 26 of 2016) (Federal Register of Legislation No. F2016L00255) made under subsection 196B(3) of the VEA is repealed.

## 5 Application

This instrument applies to a claim to which section 120B of the VEA or section 339 of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* applies.

## 6 Definitions

The terms defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary have the meaning given when used in this instrument.

## 7 Kind of injury, disease or death to which this Statement of Principles relates

- (1) This Statement of Principles is about Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis and death from Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis.

### *Meaning of Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis*

- (2) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis:
  - (a) means an infection with spirochete bacteria of the *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato* complex, which has been transmitted by the bite of a tick of the genus *Ixodes*, in a geographic location where Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis is endemic.
  - (b) includes chronic untreated Lyme disease;
  - (c) excludes Lyme-like illness;

Note 1: *Borrelia* species which are members of the *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato* complex include *Borrelia burgdorferi*, *B. afzelii*, *B. americana*, *B. andersonii*, *B. bavariensis*, *B. bissettii*, *B. californiensis*, *B. carolinensis*, *B. finlandensis*, *B. garinii*, *B. japonica*, *B. kurtenbachii*, *B. lanei*, *B. lusitaniae*, *B. mayonii*, *B. maritima*, *B. sinica*, *B. spielmanii*, *B. tanukii*, *B. turdi*, *B. valaisiana*, and *B. yangtzensis*.

Note 2: Ixodes species of tick known to transmit *Borrelia* spp. to humans include *Ixodes dentatus*, *I. granulatus*, *I. jellisonii*, *I. minor*, *I. ovatus*, *I. pacificus*, *I. persulcatus*, *I. nipponensis*, *I. ricinus*, *I. scapularis*, *I. spinipalpis*, *I. tanukii*, and *I. turdus*.

Note 3: Geographic locations where Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis is endemic include the United States of America, southern Canada, Europe, the United Kingdom, Russia, Japan, and north-eastern China.

Note 4: Clinical manifestations of Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis include a skin rash expanding out from the site of the tick bite (erythema migrans), headache, fatigue, joint pain and swelling, heart palpitations, irregular heartbeat, nerve pain, and facial palsy.

Note 5: Lyme disease infection can be confirmed through laboratory testing of blood. The usual method is IgM and IgG serology (by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay or immunofluorescence antibody test) followed by a Western blot if the serology was positive. Though *Borrelia* culture is considered the gold standard of diagnosis, it is difficult to achieve.

- (3) While Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis attracts ICD-10-AM code A69.2, in applying this Statement of Principles the meaning of Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis is that given in subsection (2).
- (4) For subsection (3), a reference to an ICD-10-AM code is a reference to the code assigned to a particular kind of injury or disease in *The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, Australian Modification (ICD-10-AM)*, Tenth Edition, effective date of 1 July 2017, copyrighted by the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, ISBN 978-1-76007-296-4.

#### *Death from Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis*

- (5) For the purposes of this Statement of Principles, Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis, in relation to a person, includes death from a terminal event or condition that was contributed to by the person's Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis.

Note: *terminal event* is defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

## **8 Basis for determining the factors**

On the sound medical-scientific evidence available, the Repatriation Medical Authority is of the view that it is more probable than not that Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis and death from Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis can be related to relevant service rendered by veterans or members of the Forces under the VEA, or members under the MRCA.

Note: *MRCA*, *relevant service* and *VEA* are defined in the Schedule 1 – Dictionary.

## **9 Factors that must exist**

At least one of the following factors must exist before it can be said that, on the balance of probabilities, Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis or death from Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis is connected with the circumstances of a person's relevant service:

- (1) being exposed to spirochetes of the *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato* complex within the 33 days before clinical onset;
- (2) being bitten by a tick of the genus *Ixodes* infected with spirochetes of the *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato* complex within the 33 days before clinical onset;
- (3) being in a geographic location where human Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis was endemic within the 33 days before clinical onset;
- (4) inability to obtain appropriate clinical management for Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis before clinical worsening.

#### **10 Relationship to service**

- (1) The existence in a person of any factor referred to in section 9, must be related to the relevant service rendered by the person.
- (2) The factor set out in subsection 9(4) applies only to material contribution to, or aggravation of, Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis where the person's Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis was suffered or contracted before or during (but did not arise out of) the person's relevant service.

#### **11 Factors referring to an injury or disease covered by another Statement of Principles**

In this Statement of Principles:

- (1) if a factor referred to in section 9 applies in relation to a person; and
- (2) that factor refers to an injury or disease in respect of which a Statement of Principles has been determined under subsection 196B(3) of the VEA;

then the factors in that Statement of Principles apply in accordance with the terms of that Statement of Principles as in force from time to time.

# Schedule 1 - Dictionary

Note: See Section 6

## 1 Definitions

In this instrument:

*Lyme disease/Lyme borreliosis*—see subsection 7(2).

*MRCA* means the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*.

*relevant service* means:

- (a) eligible war service (other than operational service) under the VEA;
- (b) defence service (other than hazardous service and British nuclear test defence service) under the VEA; or
- (c) peacetime service under the MRCA.

Note: *MRCA* and *VEA* are also defined in the Schedule 1 - Dictionary.

*terminal event* means the proximate or ultimate cause of death and includes the following:

- (a) pneumonia;
- (b) respiratory failure;
- (c) cardiac arrest;
- (d) circulatory failure; or
- (e) cessation of brain function.

*VEA* means the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.