

Victim steps up to Lyme challenge

By **MICHELLE HERBISON**

WHEN Michelle Kelly's fatigue, pain and weakness continued deteriorating she suspected a doctor's diagnosis of chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia was inaccurate.

The 42-year-old of Portarlington, once an active outdoor-type, has been confined to her couch for most of the last three years with what she believes to be Lyme disease.

"We started to look into what else it could be mid-last year. Our journey through my illness has been very confusing."

Ms Kelly said she was now working with a specialist naturopathic doctor in America via Skype appointments, with long-term antibiotic treatment improving her symptoms so far.

She believed she contracted the tick-borne Lyme disease during a camping and hiking trip in England just before her symptoms struck.

"Even if you're infected outside the country, no one here knows what this is or how to deal with it."

Barwon Medicare Local's Dr Jane Opie said Lyme disease was uncommon in Victoria and difficult for doctors to diagnose.

An improving but still weakened Ms Kelly and husband Steve plan to walk from Sorrento to Melbourne next month to raise awareness and funds for research into tick-borne diseases.

"I'll have to pace myself," Ms Kelly said. "I'm only walking 10 minutes every hour then I will be pushed in my wheelchair for the remaining time."

Ms Kelly said proceeds would go to tick-borne disease researchers at Karl McManus Foundation. More information is available at walkaware.weebly.com or [facebook.com/walkaware](https://www.facebook.com/walkaware).



STEPPING UP: Michelle Kelly plans to walk part of the way and ride her wheelchair for the remainder of her fundraiser walk between Sorrento and Melbourne.

Picture: **GREG WANE** 95684