

# Statement

**The Hon Lisa Neville MP**

Minister for Police and Emergency Services  
Minister for Water



Friday, 25 June 2021

## STATEMENT FROM LISA NEVILLE

As many people are aware, I have been battling a prolonged and severe flare-up of Crohns disease since 2020, which lead to multiple surgeries, hospital stays and an absence of leave from my role as Minister.

Throughout this time there have been various complications in my treatment. Based on advice from my doctors I am not physically able to return to work at the end of June, as originally planned.

This additional delay has been personally very disappointing to me, but my doctors have a plan and I anticipate that all going well, I will be able to return at some point in August – subject to medical advice.

Every recovery from bowel surgery is different. The more serious the condition is when having surgery, the more likely recovery will be slower.

In my case, by the time my initial surgery occurred on 6 April, the small bowel was in a critical condition. I was in hospital for four weeks following surgery, including one week in the Intensive Care Unit given the seriousness of my condition. On 15 April a second surgery was required for yet another complication of Crohns.

Even after I returned home ongoing complications meant I was admitted for further week in late May to try to get my symptoms once again under control.

My surgery involved removal of the terminal ileum of the small bowel, leading to malabsorption of key electrolytes, which require me to have weekly infusions to give my body the nutrients it is struggling to keep.

We are also working on various options to control bowel complications, including chronic diarrhoea – a common complication of this surgery and one suffered by many people with Crohns, although one not often discussed openly.

I am working hard to rebuild my physical and mental strength, after so long battling this flare-up and the toll the surgeries and complications have taken.

To say this experience shook me is an understatement. Particularly my week in ICU. Despite the best possible medical care, finding out I had reached that level of seriousness gave me a very real scare.

I miss work, but these jobs are not something you can do part time. You have to be able to give it your all. As frustrating as it is, I am just not at that point yet.

My goal is to take the next few weeks to get on top of these post-surgery impacts and focus on my medical team's plan to get my medication right, so I can be confident I can come back at full strength.

I feel lucky that I have had such great care from an amazing surgeon and gastroenterologist and the countless other doctors, nurses, support staff and day centre staff at St John of God Hospital.

I want to thank everyone who has reached out to me during this time – particularly Crohns sufferers, for their letters and emails sharing their individual journeys. Some are like mine, some are so much worse.

**Media contact:** Nikki Mott 0416 311 214 | [nikki.mott@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:nikki.mott@minstaff.vic.gov.au)

It is clear we need to do more to talk about this silent and often invisible disease – and I intend to help in this regard once I am recovered from this latest episode.

I also want to thank my local community who have been so supportive throughout this time. I am looking forward to being back representing the people of Bellarine and supporting the Victorian community as a Minister.