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Sufferers are caught short by ignorance

SUFFERERS of the bowel disorders Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are still denied access to toilets by retailers despite their serious illnesses.

A national survey by Crohn's and Colitis Australia found that 41 per cent of respondents who required urgent access to a toilet were told to go elsewhere and a further 61 per cent had difficulty accessing facilities.

The worst offenders were petrol stations, cafes and retail shopping strips.

Penrith's Catherine Collins has ulcerative colitis and said she had experienced discrimination on many occasions.

"There is a real lack of awareness of the condition," she said.

"It would be such a relief to say I have this disease and not have to stand there and explain what it is when you just don't have time."

Ms Collins said day-to-day activities had to be planned around proximity to accessible toilets.

CCA chief executive Francesca Manglaviti said the survey showed little improvement by retailers to help.

"Many of our members found they had to go through the embarrassment of explaining the ins and outs of their illness for the chance to use the toilets," she said.

"Even then, they weren't always successful in gaining access. This is simply not good enough in a compassionate society."