



# Lack of information

**NOUR AZHAR**

FOR 25 years, Claudine Demirian has been fighting an unknown illness.

She was labelled a hypochondriac by her friends and family and struggled to understand why doctors were unable to find out what was wrong.

Two years ago the Denistone resident, 40, underwent extensive testing and was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a condition that can cause severe diarrhoea and uncontrollable bowel movements.

"At first I was relieved to finally know it wasn't all in my head, the stomach pains, the fever, all of it," Mrs Demirian said. "It proved to everyone that I was valid in going to the doctors all these years."

But the mother of Lucinn, 10, Lilly, 8, and Talyn, 6, said she became depressed after finding out there was no cure, just medication.

Then came the final straw, she was denied access to toilet at her children's former school.

"When you need to go, there is no question about it, you have to go, otherwise you will soil yourself," Mrs Demirian said.

"I asked to use the staff toilets and was told no, it was only for staff . . . I explained that I had a condition, but I was directed to the kids' toilet instead. Can you imagine asking an adult to use a kids' size toilet, especially when you are sick."

Mrs Demirian said ignorance and lack of awareness clouded people judgment when it came to Crohn's disease.

"I have arthritis in my pelvis but I have



**Claudine Demirian of Denistone has Crohn's disease and was denied emergency access to toilets at her childrens' school.**

Picture: BRENT McGILVARY -FP446648

- Crohn's is an inflammatory disease that occurs in the intestines.
- Causes are unknown but believed to be a combination of genetic, environmental and immunological factors.
- Symptoms include abdominal cramps and pain, diarrhoea, fever, loss of appetite and weight loss, tiredness, fatigue and anaemia.
- More than 61,000 Australians have inflammatory bowel disease.

been told off for using access toilets because I didn't look disabled," she said.

"People know about cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and other physical disabilities, but they don't know about other diseases that hinder your ability to function normally even if you look normal."

For more information about the condition visit [crohnsandcolitis.com.au](http://crohnsandcolitis.com.au).