



UNABLE TO WAIT BUT ACCESS DENIED

A national survey, conducted by Crohn's & Colitis Australia (CCA) has found that 41 percent of respondents who required urgent access to a toilet were told to go elsewhere, even when the nearest public toilets were a long distance and often locked.

A further 61 percent had difficulty accessing facilities.

The worst offenders were petrol stations, cafes and retail shopping strips. More than half of the people denied access were turned away after explaining their illness, and producing a card outlining their need for urgent access to a toilet.

Many people were told the toilets were only for paying customers and some were forced to buy petrol to access facilities. Some children were also denied

access to the toilet during class time.

More than 61,000 Australians have Crohn's disease or colitis, collectively known as Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), with an economic cost of \$2.7 billion every year.

The disease is expected to rise by 23 per cent by 2020, and is more prevalent than epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis.

CCA chief executive Francesca Manglaviti said the survey results were disappointing, and showed retailers needed to be better educated about the needs of people living with Crohn's and colitis.

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

The survey also found: 54 percent suffered an embarrassing toilet accident in public; 70 percent won't leave the house due to concerns about accessing toilets when they are experiencing a disease flare up; and 77 percent had stopped certain activities for fear of having an accident, including going shopping, catching public transport, going on holiday and playing sport.

CCA issues members with a *Can't Wait* card that can be shown to retailers, identifying them as someone with Crohn's or colitis, requesting the holder be given access to toilet facilities.

Just 14 percent of people using the cards said they had noticed a change in attitude since last surveyed in 2008.

"This shows that we need to get the *Can't Wait* card more widely recognised by the business community," Ms Manglaviti said.

"People with Crohn's or colitis should be able to go out and conduct their business with the confidence that they can access a toilet when needed."

CCA have been highlighting the issue with major retail chains and associations throughout May (National Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month). For more information phone 1800 138 029 or go to www.crohnsandcolitis.com.au.