



Bernadette Eriksen is improving the lives of people with swallowing difficulties.

Making a difference

IT STARTED as a discussion with a food scientist, and from her kitchen table Bernadette Eriksen launched a plan to improve the lives of people suffering dysphagia.

Twenty years later, the mother-of-two has a multi-million-dollar textured food and drink empire exporting internationally, and more than 100 staff.

Ms Eriksen won the 2017 Greater Brisbane Woman in Business of the Year award and said she wanted to use her experience to highlight the isolating condition, as a

result of which people have difficulty swallowing.

“It’s quite exhilarating ... I’m really proud (to have won),” she said. “I think with this award, one of the most important things was to put the spotlight on dysphagia. It impacts 12 to 15 per cent of the population and people know nothing about it.”

Ms Eriksen said they had developed 26 flavours for texture-modified diets, and stable viscosity ice cream.

“We are empowering (people), and giving them choice

... it means it (dysphagia) doesn’t have to define them.”

OTHER WINNERS

- Sal Oliver-Lange: Barefoot Physiotherapy
- Angela Julian-Armitage: Migration Institute of Australia
- Elena Gosse: AIS Pty Ltd
- Samantha Zaleski: Artist
- Lana Burke: Mt Gravatt SHS
- Gail Ker: ACCESS Community Services
- Lily MacDonald: Moreton Bay College