

# Liquid assets thick on the ground

**JACINDA TUTTY**

ONE in three people over the age of 65 suffers from dysphagia, which has been likened to being water-boarded 24 hours a day.

But \$20 million Brisbane business Flavour Creations' unique products have helped provide relief and independence to sufferers, with more than 100,000 cups of pre-thickened drinks now produced every day.

"It really doesn't receive the consideration it deserves," founder Bernadette Eriksen said.

"With the swallowing reflex affected, dysphagics are unable to swallow liquids without the risk of choking or fluids entering the lungs, which can lead to infection ... As a result, any fluids they consume must be thickened.

"Around 20 years ago, the industry was flooded with flavourless, starch-based and sugar gum thickening products that really offered no nu-

tritional value ... This is where I identified a gap in the market."

After starting the business from her kitchen bench in 1997, Flavour Creations then developed their range to launch their first ready-made products in 2003, which were provided to patients in hospitals, aged-care facilities and at home. They are now the global market leaders in thickening technology.

"Twenty years ago, I got called the "thick lady" when I

was in the facilities. Dysphagia was little known and poorly understood," she said.

"We are the market leaders and have grown as a result of the innovation behind our products."

Ms Eriksen now hires more than 100 people across Australia and New Zealand, and is eyeing expansion into Asia.

She also hopes to finalise a partnership agreement with an international global health science company to export a range of nutritional and dys-

phagia products to Europe.

The company is looking to expand their product range focusing on food texture modification that "looks appealing, tastes great and is nutrient dense".

**MARKET LEADER:**  
**Flavour Creations founder**  
**Bernadette Eriksen.**  
**Picture: Mark Cranitch**

