

### **Brisbane boy's courageous story is easy to swallow**

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March - A young Brisbane boy and his family have shared their courageous story to highlight the importance of something most of us take for granted.

Like breathing, swallowing is essential to everyday life. Yet over one million Australians – including young Aston Capper, of Victoria Point – difficulty or discomfort when swallowing can have a profound impact on their health.

Dysphagia (dis-fay-jah) is the medical term used to describe difficulty or discomfort in swallowing. If not identified or managed properly, the condition can lead to dehydration and malnutrition, choking and even death.

Today (Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March) is Swallowing Awareness Day. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of dysphagia and where help is available.

Signs of a swallowing problem include coughing, gagging or choking when eating and drinking. Swallowing problems can mean food, drinks or saliva “go down the wrong way”, getting into the lungs rather than the stomach.

According to the national peak body for the speech pathology profession in Australia, Speech Pathology Australia (SPA), difficulty with swallowing can be the result of ageing or particular health conditions such as stroke, dementia and Parkinson's disease, head and neck cancers, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy can affect the muscles that open and close the mouth, move the lips and tongue, and control swallowing.

Brisbane youngster Aston Capper was diagnosed with cerebral palsy just after his second birthday. Soon after, parents Morgan and Brenton witnessed Aston's weight drop dangerously low as he struggled to eat and drink.

They contacted Brisbane specialist food manufacturer, Flavour Creations, about a thickening product that within two weeks saw their boisterous little boy back eating and drinking again.

The family are sharing their story as part of Swallowing Awareness Day to help educate the community about dysphagia and treatments.

Flavour Creations was established 20 years ago by 2017 *Telstra Queensland Business Woman of the Year* Bernadette Eriksen. She was also awarded the 2017 *Telstra Queensland Entrepreneur Award* and the *Greater Brisbane Woman in Business of the Year Award 2017*.

“Having spent the past 20 years researching and developing thickened foods and fluids to help manage swallowing disorders and maintain hydration, energy and nutrition, its stories like Aston's that bring it all home,” Ms Eriksen said.

“His story reminds us that swallowing disorders can impact people of any age.”

Ms Eriksen said: “Mealtime should be safe and fun. But the reality is that one in 17 people will develop some form of dysphagia in their lifetime, placing them at risk of choking.

“Many people with dysphagia suffer in silence, not knowing that they have the condition and that help is available.”

While dysphagia is a condition that can affect people of any age, it is particularly prevalent among the elderly, including up to half of residents in long-term care facilities.

For further information on the condition, diagnosis and management of dysphagia, please refer to a speech pathologist or visit the SPA website [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au).

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### Dysphagia Fast Facts

- Humans swallow at least 900 times a day, around three times an hour during sleep, once per minute while awake and even more during meals.
- Swallowing uses 26 muscles
- Around one million Australians have a swallowing difficulty. Swallowing problems can occur at any stage of life. However, the knowledge of dysphagia and its implications remain largely unknown for most Australians.

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### About Flavour Creations

Flavour Creations is a Brisbane-based specialist food and drink manufacturer that researches and develops innovative dysphagia and nutrition products to support a healthy lifestyle and improve the lives of people living with dysphagia. Flavour Creations products are sold throughout Australia and New Zealand and exported to Europe and Asia. For more visit [www.flavourcreations.com.au](http://www.flavourcreations.com.au)

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**Watch Aston's Story** <https://vimeo.com/259803502> or read more here <https://www.flavourcreations.com.au/about-us/my-dysphagia-story>.

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