



# AnaphylaxisAustralia

A charity committed to helping keep those with severe allergy safe

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**7 May 2012**

## **When eating out can be risky**

**Food Allergy Awareness Week May 14 - 18 2012**

Food Services Industry staff are being implored to take allergies seriously as the incidence of potentially life threatening allergies is reaching epidemic proportions in Australia.

Recent research shows the majority of food allergic reactions occur when eating outside the home, many in restaurants and cafes.

Approximately nine foods cause about 90 per cent of all reactions, with dangerous foods often appearing in unexpected places - from shellfish in soup stock to nuts used in flour.

Maria Said, President of Anaphylaxis Australia, said the food service industry not only has a role to play, but a responsibility.

“This is a real food safety issue, just like salmonella...and it’s important that the food service industry takes it seriously.”

Anaphylaxis Australia receives roughly one report a week of someone having experienced an allergic reaction whilst eating out even though they had disclosed their allergy to the food service provider.

“If someone has an allergy, it’s not up to the 15 year-old waitress to keep that in mind, it’s up to everyone in that facility to have an understanding that the person at table 4 has a potentially life-threatening allergy,” Ms Said said.

Chef Alex Herbert, agreed, saying food industry staff need to treat any customer’s allergy as potentially life threatening. Those with a food allergy must disclose their allergy so that staff can take extra care in preparing their meal.

### **Awareness can save lives**

Awareness and education could have saved Shane Townsend’s wife from falling into a coma within an hour of realising there had been nuts in her meal, even though she’d told staff she was allergic.

Richelle Townsend suffered an anaphylactic reaction in 1991 after eating at a restaurant. She has been in a nursing home ever since.

“When something like this happens you realise that things worse than death can happen, and this is one of them”, said Mr Townsend.

Anaphylaxis isn't as rare as you'd think: roughly ten people die of an anaphylactic reaction each year in Australia. Many are treated promptly with adrenaline, either in the community setting or in hospital. Sadly, Mrs Townsend, has a severe brain injury which has left her totally dependent on the care of others.

Anaphylaxis Australia President Maria Said recommends some simple steps for sufferers of food allergy when eating out.

"When properly managed, food allergy sufferers can lead close-to-normal lives", she said. People with food allergy have a primary responsibility to always disclose their allergy to those preparing their food and food service staff must have systems in place to prepare simple foods for someone at risk of anaphylaxis.

**ENDS**

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**Anaphylaxis Australia Inc** is a non-profit Australian charity which was formed in 1993. AAI's mission is to increase awareness of anaphylaxis through education, research and support. The organisation works with health and teaching professionals, members of the food industry and all who are touched by life-threatening allergy so that, together, we can improve the quality of life of Australians with allergies, nationally.

For more information visit the AAI website: [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au) or call 1300 728 000

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