



Vic funds pilot allergy campaign

By Michelle Draper

The Lane family was eating out at a pancake restaurant when their 11-month-old daughter Belle's face started to swell and turn a deep shade of red.

The family had specifically ordered egg-free hash browns, as Belle was still under 12 months old, but her reaction was fast and fierce.

"Basically, within minutes her face had swelled up into very swollen, very red rashes and she was clearly very distressed, crying inconsolably," her mother, Erica Lane, said.

Belle was taken to the emergency department and diagnosed with an allergy to egg. At the age of three, she was also found to be allergic to nuts and sesame seeds.

Belle, now eight, still suffers from the allergies, although she has escaped any further emergencies.

But Ms Lane admits it has changed the family's life. "Basically our life has been turned totally upside down."

The family rarely eat out but when they do, Belle's carefully home-cooked food is taken to the restaurant and the family requests staff heat it up, without so much as transferring it to another plate. "It's

as much about how you prepare the food as the food itself," she said.

The Victorian Government committed \$50,000 yesterday to a test program involving several local councils, to educate hospitality staff about allergies and food handling.

If successful, the pilot will be rolled out across the state as a multilingual allergy and anaphylaxis education and awareness campaign. Anaphylaxis is the most serious form of food allergy reaction and can be life-threatening.

Announcing the funding, Victorian Health Minister Daniel Andrews said local government did most of the legwork in terms of food handling. "We will support them to educate, to train, to raise a proper level of ongoing awareness of these matters with those who actually handle food," he said.

The charity set up by late Crazy John's mobile phone entrepreneur, John Ilhan, the Ilhan Food Allergy Foundation, issued yesterday the results of a nationwide survey which found one-third of households included a person with a food allergy.

The research, which surveyed 1386 people, found about 29 per cent of households had at least one person with a food allergy. **AAP**