

A FAMILY AFFAIR



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The kids all have a part to play. Vanessa's baby nephew, Roger, is model-in-chief for the Little Aussie Monsters nappies.

A BABY BRAND HAS BROUGHT THE CARRICK FAMILY TOGETHER

Vanessa and Matt Carrick were looking for a business to buy, not just for themselves but for Matt's brothers Andrew and Brenton Dunton and their wives Claire and Morgan.

"We'd identified that we all had such complementary skill-sets. Between us we have marketing, sales, photography, accountancy and journalism," Vanessa, 45, from Brisbane tells WHO. "The plan was that they'd all work on the business on the side [of their other jobs] and I'd be the driver."

Kids' brand Little Aussie Monster, which sells cloth nappies, wet bags for swimmers and various other sustainable products, came up for sale in 2023 and the group jumped at it.

"The previous owner had taken it as far as she could by herself but it was a hard slog," Vanessa says. "We immediately saw we could add value and we loved that it was a business that helped young families."



Andrew, Brenton and Matt live in different parts of the country but apps and video calls allow all the families to work together.

The Carricks had used cloth nappies for their own kids, Evie, now 12, and Daisy, 7, and were passionate about the savings to both families' pockets and the environment.

"Every baby uses between 2500 to 5000 nappies in their lifetime and each nappy takes about 100 years to decompose," Vanessa says. "There's also a big financial saving by using cloth instead of disposable – it's around \$2500 per child."

Matt's brothers were sold, too, and the group quickly set about simplifying and

tidying up Little Aussie Monster's business operations.

"There were so many different sales channels, which made it very admin-heavy so we started by stripping it back so we could focus on socials and the website," Vanessa says. "It meant there was a dip in sales for a bit and that was a bit hairy, but we expected it."

Guided by their customers, the new owners launched some new nappy designs and tweaked things like the elastic, and improved the overall quality.

"Something that really surprised us was

"We loved that we could help families"
- VANESSA

the wet bags," Vanessa says. "When we bought the business, there was around 1000 in stock and we thought we wouldn't need that many, but we do! Our biggest win has been the fishing shirts," she continues. The shirts, which range in size from baby onesies to size 4, "fly off the shelves," she says. "We've increased that range and then added new products, like the change mats."

The plan going forward is to extend the life cycle of their customers with products that assist in each new transition children take. "We want to go beyond the baby stage. We're into swimming lessons and preschool and then it's going into that

school age group," Vanessa says.

There's new products to launch and their own experience as parents has led them to create a mattress protector that goes over the sheets in case of bedwetting.

Over the last six months, all the hard work on Little Aussie Monster has started paying dividends and, more than that, it's united a family.

"We are all in different locations so we have a fortnightly video meeting. It's been very positive so far – it's helped us grow closer as a family and we wouldn't talk nearly as much if it wasn't for the business," Vanessa says.

• By Emma Levett



Australians use 5.6 million disposable nappies every day, with over 2 billion used nappies going into landfill every year.



Besides cloth nappies, Little Aussie Monsters also sells a range of swim nappies, as well as hats and sunglasses.



The wet bags are popular with daycare centres, which use them instead of single-use plastic shopping bags.