

+ COVID-19 Loan helping travel agents to remain open during restrictions

In travel agency offices across the state, staff are in demand and working overtime to help their clients— even when planes are grounded and domestic travel is at a standstill during COVID-19.

Among them are 35 staff travel agent Debbie Rains employs at six stores in Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton, collectively Travel Associates, but COVID-19 travel restrictions mean there is plenty of money going out through refunds but none going into the business.

Ms Rains has been able to use a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan to keep all 35 staff in jobs and working to maintain their commitment to their clients.

The loan scheme administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA), provides finance of up to \$250,000 for businesses and non-profit organisations impacted by COVID-19 to assist with carry-on expenses such as employee wages, rent and rates and other expenditure.

“The impact of COVID-19 has been absolutely dire,” Ms Rains said.

“Immediately our total income ceased but as we are travel agents, all the work we did putting travel and holiday itineraries together, we have now had to cancel. That income has been spent on business running costs and now all our staff are busy, there is plenty of work to do, but there is no income.

“I thought I had been through everything as a travel agent and we’ve had our fair share of challenges but this was a big hit all at once.”

Ms Rains said the COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan allowed her to continue supporting all the staff and manage the business through the travel restrictions.

“I am very grateful for the opportunity to be able to access this loan. Without it I would have been having a very different conversation with the 35 people than what I am able to have right now,” she said.

“I know I have the cash available to plan a long-term strategy and we can trade out to when things start to improve.



Debbie Rains has used a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan to help support 35 staff across her six Travel Associates stores in Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton.

“Receiving this loan has been able to help me continue with a positive focus and use this time to upskill my staff to have them ready for when we can jump at new opportunities. Travel will take a long time to go back to normal, or maybe it never will, and there will be significant changes to the way we travel but we can adapt to that.”

Ms Rains said there was a greater need now more than ever to support regional business.

“Every dollar spent with a local business goes through a community 13 times so it’s very important to support them,” she said.

“Receiving this loan has been able to help me continue with a positive focus...”

“On the flip side, local employment is also helping the community by spending money locally. It means people can stay in regional towns and not have to go to bigger cities to find work. It keeps money in the regions.”

“Travel agents are getting a hard review at the moment, but our guys are working really hard and long hours because they care about their clients. It’s not our clients’ faults they’ve had to cancel but it’s not ours either. We are doing our best, so we ask the community to be patient and understanding. We have all been affected by COVID-19,” she said.

For more information see www.qrida.qld.gov.au/covid19jobssupportloans or **Freecall 1800 623 946**.

QRIDA is delivering the \$1 billion COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme on behalf of the Queensland Government.