

+ Brisbane business keeping state connected, supporting staff during COVID-19

A Brisbane telecommunications business has been able to continue supporting close to 90 employees through COVID-19, and is among the first in the state to access a Queensland Government \$500 million COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan.

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.

Connectel in Capalaba specialises in building and maintaining telecommunications infrastructure across the state, supporting services like phone and internet carriers and the NBN – a resource the state is depending on now more than ever.

Owner Russell Hinwood said the business lost significant projects when telecommunications carriers cancelled upgrade jobs, to make sure their service wasn't offline during the present high and critical demand.

"It's critical infrastructure so that's why it's important we can continue in business," Mr Hinwood said.

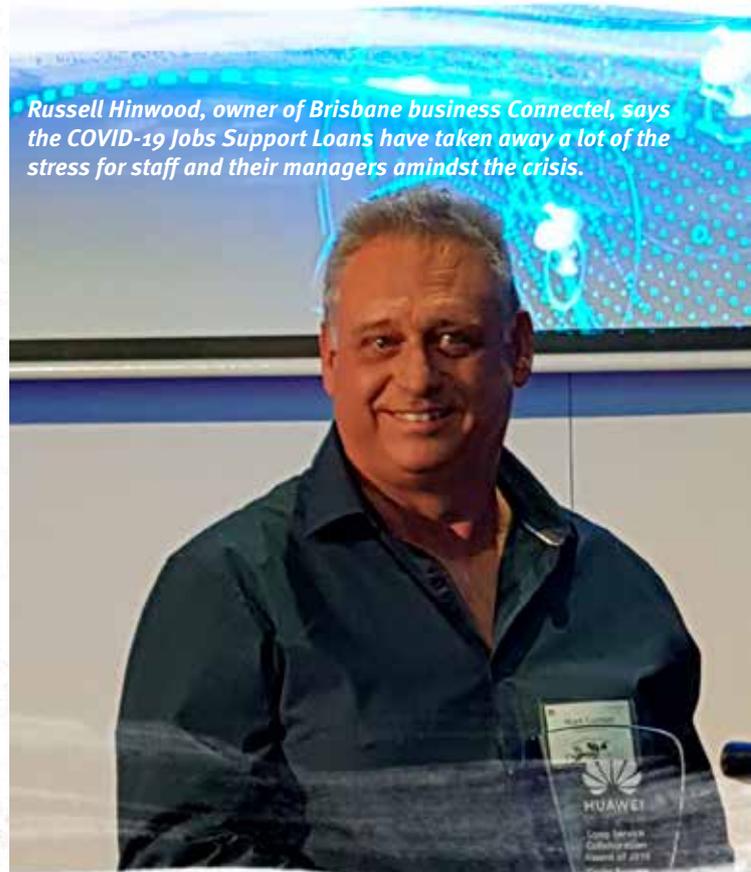
"We had three or four big jobs scheduled which were stopped; customers quite reasonably don't want their network down at the moment and you can't do big upgrades without a customer outage."

He said state border closures also impacted NBN jobs in northern New South Wales.

Connectel was among the first businesses in Queensland to access a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan to retain employees and maintain business operations.

Mr Hinwood said his application was approved within days and allowed him confidence to continue supporting his staff which without the loan was becoming harder.

"Absolutely it has taken away a lot of the stress for staff and their managers having these very difficult conversations. It means not standing down staff and not having to have that horrible discussion," he said.



“The loans help to restore business confidence ... we’ve had a boost and there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

"It's very stressful for the entire company both the employees and their managers which has a very negative overall impact on culture.

"I received a phone call in less than a week and I was ecstatic. I've been in business for 22 years so when I had that response I was very impressed and very relieved.

"The loans help to restore business confidence, things were going very flat. This situation is a nightmare but we've had a boost and there is light at the end of the tunnel."

He said the application process was straight forward if and he followed the steps and provided all the correct information.

"The day the scheme opened I was filling out the form, it was simple," Mr Hinwood said.

"It just takes a little bit of time but it's a great outcome"

"The amount of information available after the scheme was announced was really impressive."

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.