



Aussie Red Crab owners, Lyn and Les Apps have been able to use a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan to move into new markets and maintain their business

+ Crab meat business diversifying into supermarket delicacies with COVID-19 Loan support

Spanner crab spring rolls, ravioli and other value added specialty products are destined for supermarket shelves as a Sunshine Coast crab meat processor adapts to market changes during COVID-19.

A COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan will allow Aussie Red Crab at Mooloolaba to move into new markets and maintain their business into the future after COVID-19 restrictions dramatically limited demand in their traditional restaurant and export markets in China, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, New Zealand and Thailand.

“The loan gave us the working capital to be paying fixed costs that don’t change”

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.

Instead of closing the business, the loan has allowed general manager Jason Simpson and the team the working capital funds to branch into supermarket-ready products like spanner crab spring rolls, ravioli, crab cakes, gyoza, dumplings and lasagne.

The move will mean the business will be able to continue supporting employees, including fishermen, maintain operations into the future and cash-in on the spike in home cooking as the nation is encouraged to stay home.

“I’ll even look into spanner crab ice cream if I have to,” Mr Simpson said.

“We needed a long-term opportunity to expand because there is no in margin the current supply chain demand.

“The loan gave us the working capital to be paying fixed costs that don’t change. We were facing the possibility of shutting the doors. We lost 90% of our sales so this loan has enabled us to keep staff going.

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“The outlook has completely changed, the loan has been an amazing safety net. I can’t tell you the relief in my mind to be able to tell staff and fishermen they can keep going. We have to do things differently, but we have a plan in place and we are confident we can get through this difficult time.”

Mr Simpson said reduced demand and lack of airfreight in existing markets meant fishermen had to go to sea for specific crab orders.

“It’s a completely wild fishery so mother nature dictates pretty well everything until this virus came along,” he said.

“We are having to reinvent ourselves. It’s never been a supermarket product because it’s premium but that’s the new world we are in.”

Mr Simpson said the business was best placed to make the most of the new market opportunities and encourage everyday consumers to try Queensland produce in their groceries.

“We are in a different ball game, it’s a different consumer we are trying to convince to splurge,” he said.

“It’s a luxury item but we need to meet a supermarket price point balanced with the fact there is a finite number of this crab on the planet.

“We need to meet a price point so punters don’t look at it as a luxury they can’t afford.

“We are hoping the home consumer will discover the love of cooking and benefit from the fact they can have access to produce normally only destined for restaurants.

“We have to do things differently, but we have a plan in place and we are confident we can get through this difficult time”

“In the world of spanner crab, Queensland and Mooloolaba are the global hub. It’s becoming increasingly rarer and more unique to South East Queensland. People know mud crab and sand crab but spanner crab is special.

“I think we should celebrate sustainably caught wild seafood the way mother nature intended.”

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.