

+ Central Queensland distillery still brewing on with COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan

Local boutique distilled gin, rum and vodka will be back on the menu at Central Queensland pubs and clubs when COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed, as Saleyards Distillery in Rockhampton prepares for the future.

A COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan will mean business owners Warren and Catie Brewer can retain staff and maintain operations, even after more than 50% of their sales were lost when hospitality business closed.

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.

Mr Brewer said the business typically depended on a combination of bottle shop sales and bars and clubs' orders.

"Half our business is selling to bars and the other half is bottle shops, so half our business was gone overnight," he said.

"The cellar door is also closed which means we are not doing tours or tastings. Our business has suffered a 70% drop in turnover from COVID-19.

"We are still brewing and have been able to step up how much we are making. Rum takes two years in a barrel so we might not be selling that stock for another three years.

"The bottle shops sales are tiding us over."

Mr Brewer said the COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan allowed the business to continue supporting four people in the brewery and helped pay on-going business costs.

"The loan means we have been able to implement long term measures and become a little bit leaner so the next time we hit hard times we can be ready, so we can lose 50% of our business and not be too concerned about it.



Simon Crowe and Warren Brewer, of Saleyards Distillery, have been able to retain staff and operations with the help of a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan

“The loan means we have been able to implement long term measures and become a little leaner so the next time we hit hard times we can be ready...”

“We are looking at efficiency on the production side of things. It has also helped us maintain staff, the four staff in the distillery we have been able to keep on without changes.

“It has given us the money to do the feasibility on a few things.

“Without the loan was would have been more stressed about the situation. It has been a safety net and has really given us peace of mind and taken a lot of stress out of it.

“I know I can keep my staff on, and we can ride it out until the business re-opens.”

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.