

# + Iconic Brisbane hotel ready to welcome patrons back with COVID-19 Loan

What is typically a bustling and vibrant inner-Brisbane hotel, iconic in the city's gay community, Sporties is ready to welcome its loyal patrons return to their 'safe place' when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted with a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan.

The Sportmans Hotel, affectionately known as 'Sporties' founders Neil McLucas and Ray Carle were the first to establish a gay community meeting place in Brisbane more than 30 years ago.

A COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan has afforded Ray and Neil the confidence Sporties will re-open in its former glory when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Ray said the loan helped pay creditors and carry-on costs which would allow the business to return in its former capacity as soon as they were able to.

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.

Ray said the business was recognised as a safe place for Brisbane's gay community to meet and it was important for loyal customers it returned to business as usual.

"It's called The Sportmans Hotel but it's the only place in town that doesn't have State of Origin playing on the TV. It's an iconic hotel," he said.

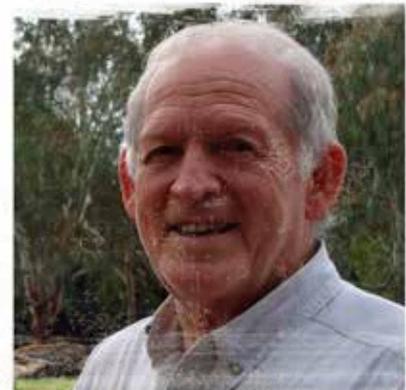
"On the ground floor is the Butch Bar and we also have a bistro and show room called Nellies where drag queens perform and have done so for 30 years. Downstairs is the Bunker. It's a safe meeting place for gay men and a lot has changed in 30 years.

"From the very first moment the hotel opened in 1989 it was a success and has been ever since. It's a unique business."

A rainbow painted on the footpath outside Sporties serves a welcome reminder of the business' contribution to the gay community over the past three decades.



*Founder of Brisbane's iconic Sportmans Hotel (pictured above), Neil McLucas (pictured right), has used a COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan to help pay creditors and carry-on costs amidst the pandemic.*



"The hotel from the very early days when AIDS was a major problem, has always promoted gay health and welfare issues and in the early days was focussed on promoting safe sex, and with time moved with health issues – more recently focussed on domestic violence," Mr Carle said.

"A recognition award came from the Brisbane City Council, after consultation with the gay community, which chose the hotel for recognition for its support for the community."

Ray said they were looking forward to bringing everyone back, especially the drag queens which were a big hit.

"Everyone will come in for the soirée and we are hopeful it will come back to what it was. Our patrons come here to meet other people, it's a fun venue when it's pumping. It's a happy place and it does have a good atmosphere," he said.

"I am more confident now than I was a couple of weeks before we closed. Neil and I were delighted we had the QRIDA loan approved, it gave us so much certainty."

For more information see [www.qrida.qld.gov.au/covid19jobssupportloans](http://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.*