

## SPAR Australia

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# MEDIA RELEASE

## SPAR Express Mackenzie Row takes home Store of the Year award

Seventeen years' hard work paid off for Geoff and Tracie Batzloff when they were awarded the SPAR Express Store of the Year Award at the 2009 SPAR Gala Awards, held at the Gold Coast Exhibition Centre last Saturday night.

The owners of the Mackenzie Row, Toowoomba store won awards for presentation, marketing, food safety, mystery shopping and legal compliance, but it was the award for Express Store of the Year they really had their sights set on.

"We all worked so hard and we really hoped to win, but we never thought it might actually happen. We were truly overwhelmed to hear our store called out and straight away we were on the phone sharing the great news with our staff," Geoff said.

Geoff believes it is a combination of an old-fashioned approach to customer service and a conscious effort to provide customers with something different that has seen their store thrive in the area for so long.

"Our store is different to the others in Toowoomba. We have a strong gourmet and deli focus, and make a point to stock items that are hard to come by elsewhere," he said.

"We've had complete strangers approach us and congratulate us on the uniqueness of our offering after browsing the store for half an hour.

"We also make sure that customer focus is number one – we still do things like carry people's bags out to their cars and make home deliveries."

Geoff said he and his wife owe much of their success to their loyal customers and dedicated staff.

"Our customers are like family to us. Over the last 17 years they've visited the store I've seen some grow from small children into adults with families of their own," he said.

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“My wife and I also want to take the opportunity to thank our staff. Some of them have been here from the very beginning and they are all dedicated to working alongside us well into the future to continue developing the business and servicing the community.”

SPAR Australia General Manager for Retail Operations, Travis Cunnane, believes Geoff and Tracie are highly deserving of the award, saying they are not only great retailers, but also great ambassadors for SPAR.

“Geoff and Tracie run a store that over-trades for its size and they are always willing to give new things a go,” Mr Cunnane said.

“But they are more than just a retailer to SPAR. They are always putting their hand up to help out Retail Operations, acting as referees for potential retailers and bringing in new business.”

This year’s Awards were more challenging than last year and Mr Cunnane said he was impressed by the hard work and commitment shown by retailers.

“This is the second year we have run the Awards program and we made several changes to the scoring and questions to ensure they were reflective of the current retail environment,” he said.

“We used external suppliers to perform most of the judging to ensure objectivity and we were blown away by how close the stores rated across the various categories – in many cases there was only one point separating the winners.

“There were a lot of new winners this year and more winners within each awards category which was fantastic to see. We want all of our retailers to succeed and hope they will use the criteria as a benchmark for their staff moving forward.”

The SPAR brand is a global success boasting around 13,610 stores in 31 countries. SPAR is an acronym that means "Save" in Europe and last year, SPAR stores, all 100 percent locally owned, injected almost \$400 million in sales into Australia’s retail economy.

Worldwide, the SPAR group serves more than 10 million customers every day and supports local communities all over the world by sponsoring local sporting clubs, charities and community events.

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