

Open letter to the Avondale Business Association members

Dear Avondale Business Association Member,

The ABA has been the subject of a lot of negative attention in the past few months and we feel it is time to speak up and set the record straight, as we are aware our local businesses are suffering as a result of unbalanced reports and online attacks. There have been character assassinations and threats to shop owners and operators, lost business and therefore lost revenue. As an association we are appalled by recent events.

We continue to be utterly focused on supporting our local businesses and in our view some of the articles in media and conversations in community groups are one-sided, incorrect and wrongly infer our association has been deceptive and misappropriated funds. We categorically refute that and have never knowingly followed unprecedented practices and processes.

The unwarranted, and sometimes misleading reportage stems from the Auckland Council freezing our Business Improvement District (BID) Policy funding (money that comes from your business rates) while we clarified and corrected some accounting oversights, and these were highlighted at a time when changes were made within the committee. These changes were done in accordance with the previously-agreed policies set down by the committee, and we are working with the Council to establish whether these policies can be upheld as we believe this to be the best outcome for our community.

All of the money we receive through your business rates is accounted for and our accounts are being re-audited by a member of CAANZ for reassurance, as long-time financial filing processes have recently been revealed to be incorrect. This is a reporting oversight, not a misappropriation of funds! We anticipate full sign off in due course.

Some individuals have questioned what the ABA has achieved in recent years, and we are proud to say that we have invested in community signage, installed and maintained public lighting on our iconic Spider installation and under shop verandas, managed the maintenance of shop facades, tackled littering, removed graffiti, established a community noticeboard, held market days and festival events such as Christmas carols and Easter promotions, planted and maintained gardens, improved footpaths, supported police community initiatives, championed youth projects and actively worked to prevent substance abuse on the streets of our business community. Our initiatives are for the betterment of our businesses, any residential community and public space improvements are the responsibility of the Auckland Council's Whau Board.

We work with complete transparency, but as a committee we will not tolerate willful actions that bring our business community into disrepute and will not publicly engage with members who use social media channels to tirade. We always have and always will represent you, our members, in a professional manner.

We want to assure you we are doing all we can to work with the Auckland Council to reverse the freeze it has placed on our BID Funding.

Yours sincerely,

Unanimously Avondale Business Association

March 2019