

15 February 2022

Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
New Zealand

By e-mail: g.robertson@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Minister

Between us we represent thousands of central Auckland businesses who just want to get through this pandemic with their teams intact. It would be fair to say that most don't want to have to ask Government for a handout, but many are on the edge - some with only days to go, some have already had to close.

You have heard from many industry groups, businesses and MPs of the tragic stories of people's livelihoods near ruin and what ongoing business failures would mean for central Auckland's vibrancy. In the city centre alone, spending in the December quarter was down -51% on the same quarter of 2020, which had already been seriously impacted by the first year of COVID-19. For the first time in over two decades, the city centre GDP was down by -4.6%. Whilst we are all confident in Auckland's future, these results will scar our prosperity and impact many lives.

Collectively we cannot stand by and let more businesses fail and our neighbourhoods suffer.

Whilst under the Red Light all businesses are open, there is not a sustainable level of customers. Public confidence has taken a hit, and people appear to be putting themselves into a self-imposed lockdown.

Although businesses can trade, there aren't enough consumers out and about to trade with. The end of the month is looming and payables are due.

As you know, Auckland business leaders have consistently asked for targeted financial support that recognises different levels of financial disadvantage, through until the green traffic light. Given the current situation this financial support is a necessity, along with policies and tools that support trading, such as rapid antigen testing and isolation requirements that don't cripple businesses and put off travellers. Communication that supports people carrying on with their lives and businesses is also important to help overcome the notion that people should be staying at home.

We ask that you move quickly to confirm targeted financial support for impacted businesses in the form of:

- Wage Subsidies and resurgence payments
- Access to low-cost money that is easy to repay (such as COVID loans)

We remain confident for the longer-term future, but there needs to be an urgent intervention to protect our city. The cost of doing nothing is too great and as well as the high cost on people's lives and livelihoods, we run the risk of not having a vibrant central Auckland, just when we want to showcase our city when the border reopens.

Yours sincerely

Viv Beck

On behalf of the following business associations:

Heart of the City

Newmarket

Karangahape Road

Parnell

Ponsonby

Uptown