



**Chris Hammonds**, pictured, has chaired the [Dominion Road Business Association](#) for the past 11 years, eight of which he's worked in partnership with long-time BID programme manager Gary Holmes.

The Mondo Travel boss tells us that his mantra is to work with politicians and transport officials in a positive manner, while maintaining his resolve to find workable solutions.

We caught up with Chris who caught a live performance of The Mutton Birds' classic tune *Dominion Road* at the old Gluepot.

## DOMINION RD

*Dominion Road is bending,  
Under its own weight,  
Shining like a strip  
Cut from a sheet metal plate*

THE MUTTON BIRDS



Chris Hammonds has operated his travel agency along Dominion Rd since 1995, although the location has changed three times during those 24 years.

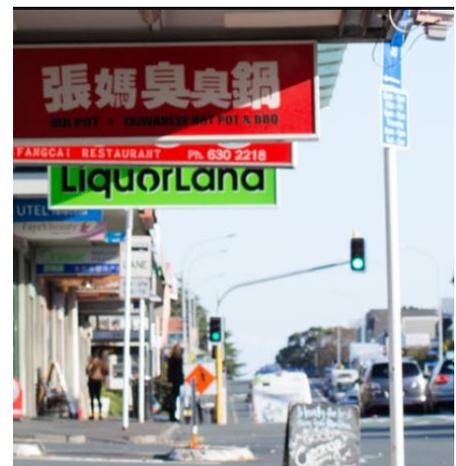
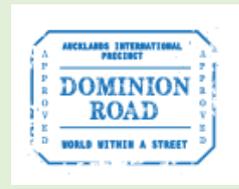
'Mondo' means 'world' and his job is to send clients to all parts of planet earth for business and pleasure.

At home, Dominion Rd's been dubbed 'the world within a street' given the ever-increasing ethnic diversity along the iconic 7.4km strip.

We asked Chris how far along the business improvement district is in becoming 'Auckland's international precinct'.

"We've been working on the *International Precinct* for a few years now. Something like this takes time, but we feel we are progressing along really well," he says.

"We need to find the right mix to include all the various nationalities along Dominion Rd, so as not to exclude anyone, or have any more dominantly promoted than others."





## Disruption and diplomacy

**From bus lanes to light rail proposals, Dominion Rd faces great infrastructural uncertainty - something it shares with many BIDs throughout our fast-growing city.**

We asked Chris how, from a governance perspective, his board had engaged with politicians and transport officials, and what approach had worked best in achieving the BID's own objectives.

"We have had various transport options proposed to us over 20 years, and these are constantly changing. Light rail is the latest version we have to face.

"We recognise public transport is important for Auckland, so generally we are supportive, but we represent the landlords and business owners along Dominion Rd.

"Our role is to make any changes as seamless as possible, with the least disruption. Car parking is something we are very protective of, in order for businesses to survive, that is a vital component, and something we are very vigilant about."

"Our mantra with this is to work with them (politicians and transport officials) in a positive manner, but also maintain our resolve in making sure any project is managed with our best interests taken into consideration. We are also not afraid to challenge anything we feel is not right.

"Gary Holmes and I presented to the AT (Auckland Transport) board late last year to voice our views, and to advocate for Dominion Rd.

"Whilst any project like light rail will be hugely disruptive to us for several years, we need to manage this to the best of our ability, and we need to work with whomever is involved, regardless of our own views.

"Co-operation is our best option to ensure the best outcome."

Dominion Rd worked alongside AT in commissioning a retail strategy study, said Chris.

"This work would assist our businesses during the construction and changes as a result of the bus lanes extensions and re-alignment of bus stops, and potentially light rail.

"We managed to stop the re-alignment of bus stops and removal of some carparks when the light rail project was announced by the new government. They had suggestions and recommendations to ensure as smooth a change as possible, however we will need this reviewed as a result.

"As the project has yet to commence, we have yet to implement any suggestions from this retail strategy."

## Cross-cultural collaboration



**Gary Holmes**



**Jennifer Lian**



Through Gary and his colleague Jennifer Lian, the Dominion Rd Business Association (DRBA) is successfully reaching out to Chinese-speaking businesses.

We asked Chris how those ethnic voices were being heard and heeded at the board table.

“In order to fully represent all of Dominion Rd, we have been actively working with Balmoral Chinese Business Association (BCBA) for a while now, and it has taken a long time to become accepted and recognised by them as their advocate,” he said.

“Having a Chinese speaker in Jennifer was vital for us to begin working together. We have been working on gaining the confidence of the businesses, so they now realise we are here for them, and co-operating together is beneficial to everyone,” he said.