


# Brown 'appalled' by dirty tricks 'head-wetting' claim

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Auckland politics has descended into dirty tricks with an attempt to smear Manukau mayor Len Brown, whose bid for Auckland supercity mayoralty would arguably make him the second most powerful politician in New Zealand.

An attempt was made to drag members of Manukau mayor Mr Brown's extended family into his mayoral credit card spending saga.

Mr Brown was "appalled" by anonymous claims he shouted a family celebration of the birth of a grandchild on his mayoral credit card and that a judge relation attended.

He told the National Business Review the claims were "complete and utter inaccuracies."

A person linked to Auckland mayor John Banks told the NBR that an \$810 dinner at Manukau's Volare Restaurant on September 27, 2009 – which Mr Brown put on his mayoral credit card – was a family affair to celebrate the birth of a grandchild.

Putting the \$810 dinner on his council credit card allegedly broke every rule in the book when Mr Brown submitted only an eftpos receipt and failed to explain the purpose of the dinner, list who was present, provide an itemised breakdown of the dinner, a GST receipt and a tax invoice.

Mr Brown's failure to follow the rules was picked up by Audit New Zealand and gave rise to speculation over the justification of the spending and whether it was a genuine business expense.

NBR was told those at the table included Chief Employment Court Judge Graeme Colgan and his son Tim, said to be married to Mr Brown's daughter from an earlier marriage, who had recently given birth.

Mr Brown said these allegations were totally incorrect - he does not have a daughter from his first marriage and the Colgan's were not present at the dinner.

Mr Brown, married to fellow lawyer Shan Inglis, said he had a step-daughter, who was married to Chief Judge Colgan's son Tim with whom she recently had a child.

An angry Mr Brown said he did not have a daughter from his first marriage and through his spin doctor David Lewis (who previously worked for ousted prime minister Helen Clark), said the claims were "complete and utter inaccuracies."

Mr Brown – who refused to speak directly to NBR – said through Mr Lewis it was an "appalling" allegation and he had no interest in talking about "such utterly ridiculous claims."

In an earlier public statement Mr Brown released details of his spending from October 1, 2007 to May 1, 2010, claiming he was doing so "in the interest of full disclosure, openness and accountability."

Between those dates Mr Brown spent \$16,977 on his mayoral credit card, a lot of it on filling his belly.

Details showed he spent up immediately before and after announcing he would run for the super city mayoralty.

No details of the \$810 Volare dinner were included on the material Mr Brown released but in the face of media pressure he later said it was a fundraising dinner, but refused to say who was at his table.

In an email from his assistant, Chief Judge Colgan said he was not present at any function at Volare Restaurant and did not know who was present.

Asked if he was related in any way to Mr Brown, Chief Judge Colgan later declined to reply on the basis he "does not discuss matters relating to his family or to the families of others with the media."

Mr Lewis said "whoever's feeding you information is trying to drag things like this into the public arena ..."

While questions still surround who Mr Brown spent ratepayers' money on, Manukau council officials were said to be satisfied with his use of the card.