



# RESCUE OF THE MONTH



## 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE

## 1 JANUARY 2010

### **CLUB: Regional Lifeguard Service Kariaotahi** **SURF LIFEGUARDS: Thomas (Willy) Goer,** **Chris Parker**

At approximately 7pm on Friday 1 January (an hour after patrol had ended), two members of the public pulled up to the clubhouse after seeing a person in the water a long way out while they were at the resort at the top of the cliff.

Chris Parker, who was the only Surf Lifeguard remaining at the club, immediately scanned the beach and spotted the swimmer. The person was 50 metres north of the main stream and now over 100 metres from shore behind the front bar. He asked one member of the public to keep an eye on the swimmer and the other to hitch the inflatable rescue boat (IRB) trailer to the rescue vehicle while he went into the club to take a look through the binoculars.

A quick look revealed that the swimmer was indeed in distress so Chris informed Surfcom via the rescue network, and requested back up from the Kariaotahi callout squad. Willy Goer had only recently departed the club and was requested to return.

Chris made his way downstairs to the gear shed where he helped to finish setting up the IRB. Then, along with the two members of the public he headed down to water's edge where a group of 20-30 bystanders had gathered. Chris decided to have one last look at the patient's position, but neither he nor the other bystanders could see him.

Chris made the decision to drive the IRB solo in the three metre surf as it could travel much faster and provide a higher platform to search from. With assistance from a member of the public, he got the IRB in the water and negotiated his way through the surf to the patient's last known position.

By the time Chris got to the front bar the patient could still not be seen. After a brief look, he caught sight of him about 150 metres north, going over the top of a wave. He saw that the patient was quite large, wearing a rain jacket and 'climbing the ladder'. He was very low down in the water. Because of the surf conditions and the patient's location, Chris was unable to perform a solo pick up, so he got as close as possible to the

patient and threw him a rescue tube from the IRB. Luckily the patient, who had little time remaining, managed to get a hold of the rescue tube and support himself.

Chris provided a quick update to Surfcom and noticed that backup had still not arrived. He was extremely concerned as to how much longer the patient could support himself. Just as he was about to abandon the IRB to attempt a tube rescue, he saw Willy Goer's van on the beach near to where the IRB had been launched. Chris informed the patient that he had to leave but would come back, and then made his way quickly to meet up with Willy in waist deep water.

Willy jumped in and they both made haste in returning to the patient. When the IRB crew got back to the scene again they waited for a gap in the dumping surf to perform a pickup. However there was no such gap and the decision was made for Willy to jump overboard with fins, and tow the patient to the land side of the front bar where a pickup could take place.

Willy performed this task effectively and luckily came in over a sand bar where it was shoulder deep. Every time a pickup was attempted, the patient would scream in pain, which unnerved the lifeguards.

Willy then supported the patient whilst Chris decided to return to the shallows to check if the sandbar went the entire way to shore. It did, so he exited the IRB at shore and then made his way out to Willy and the patient. The guards then performed a double person drag on the patient and got him to shore, 750 metres north from where the patient was initially swimming.

The patient had been in the water for about 45 minutes in total and in distress for almost half an hour. He had also swallowed a lot of water and an ambulance was requested as a precaution. The patient was later discharged from the beach with his family in a stable condition.

If the two surf lifeguards had not shown their experience and applied themselves in the manner and professionalism of which they did, the patient would have most certainly drowned.