

**Report Number:** 99 0434

**Vessel Name:** Kayak

### **Key Events**

**1.1** On Saturday 8 January 2000, a group of eight kayakers were helicoptered into the Hokitika River, via the Mungo.

**1.2** They put their kayaks in the water in the Mungo River and paddled into the Hokitika River after several kilometres. They were on the true left of the river.

**1.3** At about 1630 hours NZDT, the party had been kayaking for about four hours. They approached a set of rapids and everyone in the party, except Mr Arndt Schaftlein, got out of their kayaks to scout the rapids in order to assess the safety or otherwise.

**1.4** Mr Schaftlein was given verbal instructions and then proceeded to enter the rapid. He navigated this area satisfactorily and then another member of the party, Gostoff, navigated the rapid, again with no problems.

**1.5** A third member, Mr Robin Dodd, was able to see that both Mr Schaftlein and Gostoff had successfully negotiated the rapid. It was Mr Dodd's turn next and he received some instructions from Mr Schaftlein, for the right slot as well as his input that the left slot was much safer.

**1.6** Mr Dodd entered the rapid and everything was going well until he entered the right slot. This was a very narrow channel of fast flowing water, estimated to be running at 15 to 20 kilometres per hour between two rocks.

**1.7** After Mr Dodd entered the slot he disappeared. There was a one metre vertical gradient differential from the water flow at the top of the slot to the bottom, a distance of two to three metres. Mr Marc Lyle saw Mr Dodd enter the slot and go down.

**1.8** Mr Schaftlein was on the bank of the river videoing and waiting for Mr Dodd to reappear. A paddle was seen to come up and Mr Lyle and three others realised something was wrong and ran along the river bank. When Mr Lyle got there he saw Mr Dodd's arms at the surface of the water and the back of his helmet for about one second.

**1.9** After this everyone hurried to try to rescue Mr Dodd. Mr Lyle and the others jumped to a large rock that was located near, or in the centre of the stream, but they could not see Mr Dodd. This occurred upstream of the Frisco Canyon, about two to three kilometres. They were downstream of where the Hokitika River enters the Mungo.

**1.10** Between 1735 and 1745 hours, the party had to give up trying to save Mr Dodd. They had been attempting to save him for about one hour.

### **Key Conditions**

**2.1** Mr Marc Lyle is from Chattanooga Tennessee and is a kayak designer for Dagger Canoe Co in Harriman Tennessee. Mr Lyle had been in New Zealand for five and a half weeks with kayaking companions.

**2.2** The party consisted of Mr Lyle, Mr Dodd, Mr Schaftlein, Mr Dave Psojoles, Mr Chris Emerick, two Swedes, Thomas and Gostoff and Jim who was a friend of Mr Emerick.

**2.3** Mr Lyle has known Mr Dodd for about 18 years and they are good friends. Mr Dodd was raised by his Grandmother who passed away approximately four or five years ago. Mr Dodd's parents are divorced and he did not have a close relationship with them.

**2.4** Mr Dodd was an experienced kayaker with about 15 years experience in difficult waters around the world.

### **Contributing Factors**

Nil.

### **Cause**

**4.1** Mr Dodd was wedged, forced by the water current, into a crag or sieve in the river bed and subsequently drowned.

### **Opinions & Recommendations**

**5.1** It is recommended that kayakers should obtain information about the rivers they are kayaking prior to setting off. e.g., hazards, escape points, flows and previous accident history.

**5.2** It is further recommended that rescue skills and techniques for this type of tour should be known by the leaders. (It appears that in this case the knowledge of the kayakers rescue techniques was negligible).

**5.3** It is also recommended that a copy of this report should be sent to the Recreational Canoe Association and the New Zealand Free Style Kayaking Committee Incorporated Club, so that they can make sure that those who are active in the sport are made fully aware of the risks they take.

**5.4** Mr Graham Charles, the author of the New Zealand White Water Guidebook - 100 Great Kayak Runs - should be asked to include previous accidents and their locations in his guidebook.