

# The New Zealand Herald



## KIWIS BLAST THE AUSSIES

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Taylor hits NZ's fastest test century **B1**



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# Mystery in the Pacific

### Yacht found with sails up — but too rough to board

by Martin Johnston

A New Zealand yacht missing for 16 days has been found drifting off the Chatham Islands with its damaged sails still up.

But there was no sign of life on solo sailor Paul Janse van Rensburg's 11m steel craft Tafadzwa.

Last night, a fishing vessel pulled alongside, but the 3m swell made conditions too rough for the crew to try to board the ghost yacht.

An attempt was to be made this morning.

"The skipper of the fishing vessel has told the Rescue Co-ordination Centre he used a loudhailer to try to attract the attention of anyone on board but received no response," the centre's search and rescue mission co-ordinator, Geoff Lunt, said last night.

Friends and family of Mr Janse van Rensburg said they were desperately hoping he was alive.

"It's been a fantastic step. We're absolutely elated," said friend Warwick Gowland. "But it's a very hard position to be in emotionally.

"If he's not on board, we will go through every scenario from there. We've got our fingers and toes and everything crossed at the moment."

Mr Gowland was last night at the Mt Maunganui home of another friend of Mr Janse van Rensburg, Regan Boocock, waiting anxiously for more news.

Mr Janse van Rensburg set sail with his dog Juanita from Tauranga on March 12 to begin a new life in Gisborne with his partner, Kristin.

The 40-year-old engineer and experienced sailor's last contact was a cellphone call to Kristin on March 12.

A search started on March 16, the day after he was due in Gisborne.

An extensive aerial search found no trace of the sailor or his yacht and the search was suspended on March 18.

But yesterday, the Rescue Co-ordination Centre said the crew of an Air Force Orion on a training flight

saw the Tafadzwa at 1.45pm, drifting 110km west of the Chatham Islands — hundreds of kilometres off its course.

They could not see if Mr Janse van Rensburg was on board.

The fishing boat was diverted to the scene and remained alongside Tafadzwa last night.

Mr Lunt said the Orion crew reported that the Tafadzwa's main sail and jib were up, although they were extensively damaged.

The commanding officer of Five Squadron, Wing Commander Nick Olney, was one of about 17 on the Orion surveillance training run when the yacht appeared on their radar.

"It's unusual to find yachts in that part of the world," he said.

"There's not a lot of yacht traffic down there so interests were raised right at the very start."

As the crew got closer they could see the "badly kitted" sails, he said.

"We couldn't see into the yacht . . . but we could see all over it and there were no signs of activity.

"Hopefully Paul's on board and he's just downstairs a bit crook or something," Wing Commander Olney said.

Mr Janse van Rensburg's family and friends had been planning to pay for their own search, saying he could have sailed far further than the 800km offshore covered by the Rescue Co-ordination Centre's search, involving an Orion and three other planes.

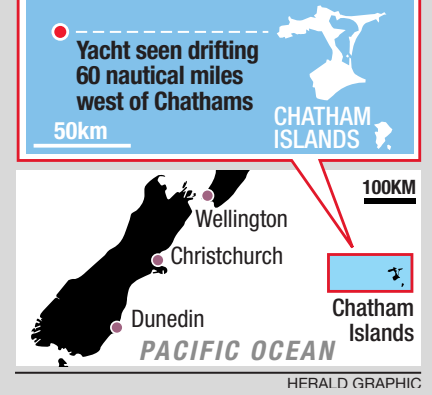
They thought it possible Mr Janse van Rensburg had abandoned his yacht for a kayak or liferaft, which would not have been picked up by radar.

The discovery of the yacht, with its sails up, is similar to that of the discovery of a catamaran off Australia's Great Barrier Reef in April 2007.

None of the three crew were on board — but its ripped sails were up, food was laid out on the table and a computer was operating.

A coroner suggested one crewman fell overboard and the other two came to grief trying to rescue him.

### NO SIGN OF LIFE



The Tafadzwa (top) has been missing since March 12, and searches by Orion aircraft (centre) failed to find any trace of the yacht and its owner, Paul Janse van Rensburg (left). Yesterday, the vessel was found near the Chatham Islands, but it could not be boarded because the sea was too rough.

## TEEN FEARED DROWNED AT PIHA

A teenager is missing, presumed drowned, after he was washed off his boogie board at Piha yesterday.

The tearful father and sister of the boy, believed to be 15, comforted each other at the Piha Surf Lifesaving Club last night.

Surf lifesavers began searching about 3pm, after a boogie board washed onto the shore.

Club captain Tony Featherston said their concerns were confirmed when friends of the teenager told lifeguards their mate was missing.

"We just kept searching until we had it confirmed, and then we went all-out," Mr Featherston said up to five boat crews, a jet ski crew, a Westpac helicopter and the coastguard plane looked for the teenager.

He said it was always difficult when a person went missing, presumed drowned.

"The guards will be upset. But that's nothing [compared] to the family. Someone's lost a son, a brother or a mate, and that's hard."

— Vaimoana Tapaleala

## I'm not going — defiant mayor digs in

### Williams denies drink-driving and says foes are using dirty tricks against him

by Bernard Orsman

A defiant North Shore Mayor, Andrew Williams, has denied he has a drinking problem and says he will not resign after allegedly urinating in public and driving home after drinking at a local restaurant.

Speaking exclusively to the Herald yesterday, Mr Williams said he did drink alcohol, but he did not drink excessively. "I'm like any other normal Kiwi male. I'm very mindful of being reasonable."

Mr Williams, who was at GPK bar and restaurant on Hurstmere Rd, Takapuna, with friends on Thursday night, said he consumed a "very minimal" quantity of red wine with food from about 6pm to 9.30pm.

"I went to GPK at the conclusion of council business. This is my private time. These are friends who just want to meet up, have a bit of a yarn and catch up on things. They don't have to get involved with the mayor's business. They were acquaintances who invited me, end of story."

Mr Williams admitted he drove home after drinking, but said he had "no comment" to make about reports that after leaving the bar, he urinated outside the North Shore council building on The Strand.

The Sunday Star Times reported yesterday that Mr Williams had been drinking at the bar and restaurant for about six hours.

The paper said he walked from the bar to the council offices, where he urinated on a tree.

He then went into the council underground carpark, collected his mayoral vehicle and drove about 6km to his Campbells Bay home.

He said he was "perfectly fine" and "very conscious of the fact I had to be up very early to be at the TV3 studios by 6am".

But pressure was building last night for Mr Williams to resign.

Glenfield Community Board member Nick Kearney asked councillors and community board members to join him in calling for the mayor to step down.

Mr Kearney said he had the signatures of five councillors — Chris Darby, Dianne Hale, Ann Hartley, Margaret Miles and Lisa Whyte — and five community board members on a letter calling on Mr Williams to go.

It will be presented to council chief executive John Brockies today.

A mayor cannot be fired as he is an elected official.

The five councillors who signed the letter are not part of Mr Williams' 'A'



FIGHTING BACK: North Shore Mayor Andrew Williams yesterday. PICTURE / SARAH IVEY

team of nine councillors who hold all the important committee jobs.

One of the signatories, Ms Hartley, a former Labour MP, said Mr Williams' behaviour last Thursday summed up the past two-and-a-half years.

"We have had to put up with a lot of very questionable behaviour from the mayor," she said.

"He is quite a bullying person and gets away with it because he has his 'A' team who support him 90 per cent of the time."

Local Government Minister Rodney Hide has also expressed concern at Mr Williams' alleged conduct.

Mr Hide said if the allegations of drinking and driving were true, Mr Williams was not fit to hold office and should examine his options.

He said Mr Williams might be a danger to himself and others.

Mayor Williams hit back yesterday, saying that Mr Hide simply did not like his opposition to the Super City reforms.

The letter being circulated by Mr Kearney was part of a dirty tricks campaign, the mayor said.

He said he was sick to his back teeth of Mr Kearney, who in another role as secretary of the Act Party was doing Mr Hide's "dirty work".

Mr Williams said political opponents were also trying to undermine his

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