

## THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (N.Z.B.M.)

### **GHODKE, Harshad Ashok (Harry)** **Sergeant, New Zealand Police**

Date of action: 19 February 2023  
Date of award: 13 December 2025

#### *Citation*

On the afternoon of 19 January 2023, a young boy was playing in the Rees River when he was pulled by the current downriver and into Lake Wakatipu, in the vicinity of Glenorchy wharf. The boy panicked when he was unable to touch the bottom or swim against the current, becoming submerged at the confluence of the river and lake.

Sergeant Harry Ghodke, an off-duty Police officer, was nearby with his family. He heard a commotion and spotted the boy, removed some of his clothing and swam to the area of the lake where he had seen the boy go under water. A strong undertow was present. Ghodke grabbed the boy, who climbed on top of him, which dragged Ghodke further down into the lake. He struggled with the undertow to keep his head above water and the boy afloat. He reassured the boy, telling him to float on his back and that he'd get more help. Ghodke began swimming back to shore against the prevailing current, which pulled him down and impeded his progress. Around 15 metres from the shore he ran out of energy and tried standing, but found no solid footing. He aimed at his family on the shore and put his energy into swimming the final distance, eventually reaching sand, walking a few steps and collapsing breathless and exhausted.

Another man on the other side of the river, Mr Jonny Young, saw Sergeant Ghodke swimming back without the boy and decided to swim out to help. Mr Young reached the boy and began pulling him, but they were separated and Mr Young stopped swimming due to exhaustion.

Sergeant Ghodke was yelling and waving, trying to attract the attention of boats on the lake. Ms Susan Burke was passing by and talked with Ghodke about swimming out to help. Ms Burke spotted Mr Young and the boy about 15 metres from the shore and swam out to the pair, noting the water deepened sharply around 10 metres from shore.

Ms Burke reached the boy and was able to swim with him back to shore. At this time, Mr Young was around seven metres from the shore and did not signal any distress before his head went underwater and he disappeared from view. As Ms Burke returned with the boy, people on the shore were yelling "he's gone under". Sergeant Ghodke waded out to meet Ms Burke and took the boy from her, telling her to go back out to help Mr Young.

Ms Burke swam to her prior location but could not see Mr Young. Two other men swam out to join her and Ms Burke ducked under the water several times, before the trio agreed to stop searching. Mr Young had unfortunately drowned in his attempt to rescue the boy and his body was recovered the following day.

The actions of Sergeant Ghodke addressed the immediate panic of the boy, calming him and having him float, allowing further time for a rescue to occur.