

## TRIBUTE

# CHRIS JAMES DRAKE

1989-2013

By Lucas Townsend

**T**he Sydney surfing community lost a friend in March. His name was Chris Drake from Queenscliff Beach and he was just 23. Chris was a lover of surfing, mesmerised by the sea and the thrill of riding. When Chris surfed he rode waves with conviction. Every turn had as much purpose as the next; his positioning was never an accident. And, oh man, he was stylish. He was impressively tall but was able to contort his long limbs into tight barrels and then unfold his wingspan into gaping hooks and roundhouse cutbacks. Speed came easy and in size he did not waver. He was always psyched to be in the water, breezing around the line-up getting twice more waves than anyone else. Surfing till dark, even in the chilling breath of winter, Chris had an affinity with surfing which was sincere and now, eternal.

While the immediacy of parting with Chris at the hands of the ocean was cutting deep, those close remembered an incredible quality. “Smile Like Drake” was a motto, a memory, an offering of respect that began simultaneous with news of his passing. It started as a hashtag on Instagram, a way for all who knew him to share their beautiful photos. It swirled everywhere on Facebook and was the title of a page created in

his memory. It was scribbled on surfboards with colourful posca pens, written in wet sand metres from lapping waves. It was printed onto t-shirts, used as lyrics, and inked onto arms and every version was completed with a blissful smile, just like the one Chris was famous for. The three words were then printed as a sticker and now sit on the back of cars, under guitar strings, on laptops, walls and books, always to be seen and never to be forgotten. “Smile Like Drake” was a simple idea that, despite being clouded by grief, helped a surfing community begin to heal. No-one could actually smile so perfectly like Drake but that didn’t matter. Just the thought, the attempt and the remembrance during times of frustration or sadness was doing justice to a man so infused with positivity.



Chris was - as simple as the words may sound - a great human being. He radiated everything delightful about life and cared intensely for those around him. His questions were always genuine and his answers thoughtful. Independence was important for Chris. He was his own man. While many often succumbed to the status quo of what is and isn’t ‘cool’, Chris turned the other way to find his own incentives, his own inspirations, his own mentors. He had an incredible tenacity for life but to live it the way he wanted.

The ocean left many with a strange tussle of emotions when Chris left us. On one hand, anger and vexation permeated after it stole a man too young. But on the other hand, he was now resting with the one thing he held so fondly. As quickly as the ocean took away, it also began to console. We only find that resolve because it runs so rich in our lives. Surfing is an incredible thing. It’s so much more than a sport, a commodity or a fad. For so many of us here, it *is* life. It’s as apart of us as our air is to breathe. As it was for Chris.

We’ll miss you forever mate. Thank you for the happiness you brought into so many people’s lives. We will continue to “Smile Like Drake” in your memory. 



ABOVE: CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF A GREAT SURFER AND FRIEND AT FRESHWATER BEACH. (MARKS) INSET: REST IN PEACE CHRIS DRAKE. (SHEFFIELD)