

## THE NEXT WAVE OF DOCTORS

[SURFINGDOCTORS.COM](http://SURFINGDOCTORS.COM)

Gunshot wounds, a surfer duct taped to a board, a rescue mission through the jungle; Hollywood blockbusters have been made with less drama.

But for Busselton emergency doctor Phil Chapman, it's all in a day's work.

The former pro surfer is a founding member of NGO Surfing Doctors, which raises funds for 3<sup>rd</sup> world medical centres as well as running infirmaries in remote surf areas.

For the last 15 years he has been the doctor in residence at Grajagan, Java (G-Land) the birthplace of Surfing Doctors.

"Initially our group was formed in an ad hoc manner after a surfer from the UK went head first into the reef at G-Land and ended up with a broken neck," explained Phil.

With a lack of medical equipment on hand, Phil used duct tape to secure the surfer to a board and stabilise his spine.

"The surfer recovered well, but following this incident, the camp owner contacted me and asked if I would like to do a one month stint as resident doc and in return I could stay and surf for free. I said yes!"

For the next eight years Phil and a few fellow doctors developed a rolling roster until a nasty trauma prompted the formation of the official NGO.

"A surfer got caught off-guard and a massive 10 foot lip crashed onto his back, forcing his legs apart and splitting his pelvis on impact. I also suspected he had internal haemorrhaging.

"We were unable to get a chopper until the following afternoon so myself and an anaesthetist, Dave Robinson, who just happened to be staying at another G-Land camp, drove him through the jungle to get help.

"It was a life and death situation. Thankfully he survived."

But this cemented the need for a more formal program to assist surfers in remote locations and Surfing Doctors was formed.

Since 2008 Surfing Doctors has evolved into an international NGO operating mainly across Indonesia, Fiji, Africa and the Solomon Islands with a team of around 30 doctors and 10 "core" members.

"Relax. Assess. React. I take the same mindset to the ED as I do before I surf heavy waves. You might really be on edge, but you have to relax and take control of the situation."



