

VJ Distributors was devastated by fire in 2006



## Good cover is just one part to being a leading local insurance provider

**HurfordParker**  
INSURANCE BROKERS LTD

Experienced insurance broker Jeff Parker has seen disasters such as fires destroy Hawke's Bay business premises and can tell the good and the bad stories when it comes to insurance cover and business continuity.

Jeff and the late Jim Hurford set up Hurford Parker on 1 June 1994 on the simple ethos that people want to know who they are signing a long-term relationship with and that that insurance broker would be by their side should the unfortunate occur.

"We were driven to setting up this business by wanting to ensure every transaction had a familiar face to it. The larger international companies no longer offered that level of service and we wanted to provide first-class service; so that when there's a claim, especially when it's in an emotional situation such as a fire, our clients have the comfort of having a local whom they could talk to," Jeff says.

"The rubber hits the road when there is a claim and we always tell our clients that we want them well insured because we will be the first call they make when disaster strikes and we want to say to 'you're very well covered'."

Jeff and the team, led by fellow director Ashley Rowe and group manager Dean Sewell, have built a strong portfolio of local business and rural clients across a wide range of industry sectors, and with it has come a level of knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with these businesses.

They have also broadened their service range to include personal insurance and life and medical cover insurance.

"Being based in Hawke's Bay means we have a wide range of clients across many sectors but at the same time, we have got to know our clients' businesses very well, which ensures they are not only well covered in the event of a disaster but they have a plan in place to keep the business running, staff employed and customers happy."

An example that many will remember is the large fire that took place at VJ Distributors on a hot and sunny Saturday in March 2006.

Many businesses would never have recovered from that devastating blow but VJ Distributors had Hurford Parker at their side, not only paying the way through the claim but helping to put in place a plan that ensured the business got up and running again quickly.

We spend a lot of time on site with clients understanding the business and its processes. This is when your business continuity plan is so important and that's where we like to start – looking at the business and its set of obvious risks as well as identifying the game-changing risks, some of which are insurable and some that aren't but can still have a plan in place for.

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"In a singular loss (events such as a fire) there's loss of market, competition and all those sorts of things, they are key risks, but then you look at your major assets such as a building and equipment and you need to



Hurford Parker's senior management team – Dean Sewell, Jeff Parker (Managing Director), Ashley Rowe and Will Parker.

realise what the impact of a fire has on your business and how quickly you can get back up and running.

"It's then entirely different if it's an event that has created multiple losses, such as an earthquake, when your business isn't the only one affected. It's then not that easy to find a new premise as many businesses are also looking too.

"The key is to have a plan that identifies both types of events, those that will only impact your business as well as those that will impact many businesses.

"People automatically assume that insurance will cover everything, but in the event of an earthquake your insurer will only pay out to a certain amount. The idea is to keep the business going and maintaining the level of turnover into the future because it's all very well getting paid out during your indemnity period if your business goes under, but what's the long-term future look like?"

Jeff estimates that many businesses are underinsured and predicts that the figure could be as high as 60–65 percent of businesses that don't have the cover they need should disaster strike.

He points to Edgecumbe, which was hit by severe flooding earlier this year, and reports rapidly rising building costs are leaving 85 percent of New Zealand homeowners underinsured.

"In the case of Edgecumbe, the number of underinsurance or no insurance was large and although we are advocates for people to be well insured, it's obvious in these situations that people aren't covered.

"Most commercial business people understand the value of having insurance but it is only one part of business continuity planning."

Hurford Parker is a founding member of a powerful group of independent New Zealand brokers called NZbrokers Management Ltd, and collectively the group employs more than 500 staff who between them place insurance business with local and international insurers for 120,000 clients with premiums in excess of \$440 million.

NZbrokers was formed to deliver additional client benefits for exclusive use by member brokers, including the development of exclusive insurance products.

Jeff says the team at Hurford Parker has a wealth of experience and is well equipped to provide first-class service and customised products.

The business is also focussed on succession planning in the business and the mantle has been taken up by Ashley and Dean along with Jeff's son William Parker, who joined the firm in January after working for three of the largest insurance broker firms in New Zealand, Australia and London.

William's arrival has also inspired a new look for the firm that includes new branding and marketing materials, such as a refreshed website. William hopes that not only will the new look create new business opportunities but help recruit new talent.

"To recruit new talent is very difficult, which is a New Zealand problem, but if we had a better education pathway into insurance – like in the UK, – then the talent pool would be bigger."

[www.hurfordparker.co.nz](http://www.hurfordparker.co.nz)