

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY DECORATION (N.Z.B.D.)

Craig David BENNETT **Constable, New Zealand Police**

Date of action: 7 May 2005

Date of award: 14 October 2006

Citation

On 7 May 2005 at about 7.15 a.m. Constable Bennett was off duty and driving past 36 Cooper Street in Dunedin, when he noticed that the house was on fire. He was advised by local residents that two children were still in the house and was shown their bedroom window. The room was thick with smoke and he could not see inside. Constable Bennett broke the glass, reached inside and could feel a child's body. He and a neighbour then broke the glass of a larger window and Constable Bennett put his upper body through the opening and dragged a boy to the window, where he handed him to two neighbours waiting outside.

He then went back into the room, using a ground sheet to cover his mouth and nose, and had to feel his way around inside, as there was no visibility. Hearing a child moan, he moved towards the noise and located a girl wedged between a bed and the wall. He wrapped the child in the ground sheet, carried her to the window and handed her to a neighbour waiting outside. He was then told that the children's mother was also still inside.

He left the house and went to a rear window and looked into another room full of smoke. Upon smashing the window, moaning could be heard from inside. Constable Bennett reached in and managed to drag a woman to the edge of the room before he was overcome by smoke. Feeling sick and dizzy, and with the woman still inside the room, he returned to his vehicle where he got a mask so he could go inside to rescue her. At this point the Fire Brigade arrived, and Constable Bennett took a fireman to the window. The fireman entered, while Constable Bennett reached in from outside, and together they were able to lift the woman out through the window.

By his exceptional bravery, Constable Bennett was able to effect the rescue of three people from the blazing building.