

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

**Michael John BROOKLANDS**  
**Sergeant, New Zealand Police**

Date of action: 22 February 2011

Date of award: 23 June 2014

### *Citation*

Sergeant Michael Brooklands (now Acting Senior Sergeant) was on duty in central Christchurch when the 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck on 22 February 2011. He was one of the first Police officers to arrive at the collapsed Canterbury Television building, and took immediate command at the site. He contacted Police Communications and gave them a situation report, requesting Fire Service and other assistance. A fire had ignited in the lower levels of the building, complicating rescue efforts. Sergeant Brooklands worked with three other Police officers on the roof of the building to conduct several rescues amongst the rubble of the building's lift tower. Their lives were at particular risk during the first hour when they were working under the precarious lift tower that was disintegrating with each aftershock. They were initially able to free a woman and two children. The Police officers then searched for audible tapping or voices and managed to pinpoint the locations of at least eight survivors. Where possible, the officers dug down to the survivors they located and, using stretchers sourced from the nearby Inland Revenue building, carried the survivors to waiting medical personnel. They heard a woman calling for help in the burning area of the building and made several attempts to reach her from outside the building, with only wet clothing wrapped around their heads to protect against the heat and smoke. This occurred before the Fire Service had arrived on the scene. Due to a brief change in wind direction they were able to climb down inside the building, reach the woman and pull her free. As well as climbing into the building and assisting with rescuing survivors, Sergeant Brooklands assumed control and deployment of staff at the site. He communicated clearly with the Police communications centre, identifying the site needs. He established a grid pattern for the building search and assigned staff to specific areas, as well as initiating the establishment of a triage and mortuary facility. Sergeant Brooklands remained the Police controller at the site until 3.00am the following morning.