

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

Dr Christopher Michael Thomas HENRY

Date of action: 22 February 2011

Date of award: 1 August 2016

Citation

On 22 February 2011 a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Christchurch, resulting in the collapse of the multi-storey CTV building. A fire had ignited in the lower levels of the building, complicating rescue efforts.

Dr Chris Henry had been working triage at Latimer Square before moving to the CTV building to provide onsite medical assistance to trapped survivors. He joined firefighters who were extracting survivors and deceased people out of a tunnel into the fourth floor of the building. The tunnel had been cleared by Fire Service personnel, but was not wide enough to fit two people side by side and rescuers had to crawl on their stomachs in the tight space. Smoke from the fire onsite was also present in the tunnel. Dr Henry took over from another doctor who had been providing medical assistance and began making trips in and out of the tunnel to assess the remaining survivors who had not been extracted, and provide medication where needed. As there was no room to turn around in the tunnel Fire Service personnel and Dr Henry were pulled out by their feet whenever there were significant aftershocks. Dr Henry made 20 trips in and out of the tunnel over a number of hours to support rescue efforts carried out in dense smoke from the fire and under the constant threat of aftershocks, providing reassurance and pain relief in the rescue of two survivors.