

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

Dr David Gwyther RICHARDS, MStJ

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 David Richards had been treating casualties at a medical tent in Latimer Square before moving to the CTV building to provide onsite medical assistance to trapped survivors. Firefighters had tunnelled into the fourth floor of the collapsed CTV building and located a group of trapped students. Dr Richards was asked if he would enter the tunnel to assess the students' injuries. 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 Richards made a number of trips in and out of the tunnel, wearing only hospital scrubs, over the course of several hours to assess three of the trapped students and provide medication where needed. During the efforts to extract the second student significant aftershocks saw Dr Richards and Fire Service personnel pulled from the tunnel by their feet on two occasions. Dr Richards' medical assistance aided in rescue efforts which were carried out in dense smoke from the fire and under the constant threat of aftershocks.