

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

Anthony Wayne TAMAKEHU

Date of action: 22 February 2011

Date of award: 23 June 2014

Citation

On 22 February 2011, Tony Tamakehu was near the Pyne Gould Corporation building in Christchurch when a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck and the building collapsed. Mr Tamakehu owns The Chainman, a supplier of specialist lifting and rigging equipment, and sub-contracts to Smith Crane and Construction. Staff from Smith Crane and Construction brought cranes and other equipment suitable for concrete slab removal and the clearing of debris. Concrete slabs were broken into pieces for removal and a large enough hole was created for Mr Tamakehu and other Smith Cranes staff to gain access to the collapsed building. They used their expert knowledge of craneage to open up holes, progressively going down through the pancaked floors of the building. As each level was opened, Mr Tamakehu crawled into the voids in the building and began systematically checking each floor for survivors, boring through debris, despite the threat of aftershocks. He was able to locate and assist several people during a time-consuming search in tight, dark conditions.

Mr Tamakehu entered confined spaces in the Pyne Gould Corporation building without knowing whether they were stable and without thought for his personal safety. He contributed to the location and rescue of several trapped people. He continued to offer assistance at the PGC and Canterbury Television buildings for several weeks following the earthquake, recovering bodies and performing other vital tasks.