

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

### James Nicholas WATKINS, 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 six-storey Canterbury Television building. A fire had ignited in the lower levels of the building, complicating rescue efforts.

Mr James Watkins, a St John Paramedic, joined Fire Service and St John personnel at the CTV building to help rescue trapped survivors. Fire Service personnel were tunnelling into the collapsed building to reach a group of trapped students. 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. Mr Watkins initially worked outside to drag the firefighters working in the tunnel back out by their ankles when significant aftershocks struck. He then made trips in and out of the tunnel to assist a doctor who was running IV lines to the trapped survivors, and to pass medication to the doctor to administer to the trapped persons. Mr Watkins contributed medical support to rescue efforts carried out in dense smoke from the fire and under the constant threat of aftershocks.