

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

Michael David YEATES **Senior Firefighter, New Zealand Fire Service**

Date of action: 22 February 2011

Date of award: 23 June 2014

Citation

On 22 February 2011 a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Christchurch, causing the collapse of the Pyne Gould Corporation building, trapping around 30 people inside. Senior Firefighter Mike Yeates worked with another firefighter to tunnel into the second floor in an attempt to gain access to trapped victims. The space they searched was too confined for the firefighters to wear protective clothing. Yeates had heard two survivors call out near his location. The first survivor located was an injured woman hemmed into a tight space around 50 centimetres high, four metres into the building. The two firefighters shifted rubble out of the way allowing the woman to be rescued. A second injured man was located pinned behind air-conditioning equipment and was freed using a hacksaw. Yeates and two other firefighters worked for 90 minutes on creating an access hole between the first and second floors. The access hole allowed for a man trapped under a table on the first floor to be extricated. The rescue efforts of Mike Yeates were carried out in unstable, confined conditions under the constant threat of aftershocks and falling masonry.