

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY DECORATION (N.Z.B.D.)

Ian Stewart ANDERSON

Date of action: 24 October 2022

Date of award: 6 December 2024

Citation

Mid-afternoon on 24 October 2022, a car crashed into a ditch and rolled onto its passenger side on State Highway 1 near Kekerengu. The female driver was injured and trapped inside, while the injured passenger was able to escape onto the roadside. The vehicle caught fire and passing motorists moved the passenger away from the car when it ignited.

Mr Ian Anderson, a truck driver, saw smoke from the crash and stopped at the scene. He exited his vehicle and was handed a fire extinguisher by another motorist, before approaching the crashed car. He saw flames coming from the gap between the bonnet and windscreen and used the fire extinguisher, which only temporarily suppressed the flames.

Mr Anderson entered the upturned car via the rear passenger door, using a walking stick to jam the door open so it would not shut on him, before being assisted by Mr Roland Ipenburg, who held the door and followed inside. Mr Anderson found the driver lying against the front passenger door. They attempted to lift the driver but were only able to roll her onto her right side. Mr Anderson was passed another fire extinguisher and deployed it within the cabin, seeing flames coming through the console. There was a burst of flame while they were in the vehicle, so Mr Anderson and Mr Ipenburg exited and began looking for more fire extinguishers. Flames were beginning to run up the clothing of the driver's right leg. At this time, Senior Constable Andrew Watson was the first emergency responder to arrive at the scene.

Senior Constable Watson deployed his fire extinguisher to suppress the fire on the driver's clothing. He lay on his stomach on the upturned side of the car, reaching into the vehicle through the rear door and managing to grasp the driver's hand. Mr Anderson held Senior Constable Watson's belt, so Watson could reach further into the vehicle without falling, with Mr Ipenburg grabbing Mr Anderson to assist. Together they tried to lift and pull the driver from the car, but Watson lost his grip. Senior Constable Watson's attempts to reach the trapped driver proved impossible and Mr Anderson and Mr Ipenburg pulled him from the car due to the severity of the fire. Soon after Senior Constable Watson exited the vehicle, it was engulfed by fire.

Mr Anderson demonstrated exceptional bravery by entering the burning vehicle to attempt to rescue the trapped driver.